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LIFE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.



LIFE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH:

Its Blessings and Responsibilities.

BY THE

REV. R. W. RANDALL, M.A.,

Vicar of All Saints, Clifton.

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To

THE MOST DEAR AND HONOURED MEMORY OF
BISHOP MOBERLY,

WHO TAUGHT ME AS A BOY AT WINCHESTER
THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH, AND ITS POWER
TO SANCTIFY LIFE ;

AND OF

BISHOP WILBERFORCE,

WHOSE WORDS, WHOSE WORKS, AND WHOSE LIFE LED ME TO SEE
IN THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH
THE SPECIAL MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD
TO THE HEART AND MIND OF ENGLAND,

These Sermons are Dedicated,

IN THE HOPE THAT THEY MAY HELP TO BRING HOME TO
OTHERS SOMETHING OF THE

BLESSINGS OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH.

P R E F A C E.

MOST of the Sermons contained in this volume were preached many years ago. Three of them have already been published in Newland's 'Seasons of the Church,' for which they were written.

The Author was requested to publish several of the Sermons at the time of their being preached, but he hesitated to comply with the request. The Sermons are published now with the hope that they may deepen in others the sense of the greatness of the Blessing and of the Responsibility of membership in the Church of England. The sense of that Blessing has grown ever stronger in the Author's mind during a ministry of more than forty years. This has led him to give to this volume the title of 'Life in the

Catholic Church.' If Life, real, true Life, is Love for God, most assuredly this Life is to be found in the fulness of its Power and its Joy, in that wondrous Union with Christ our Lord granted to all faithful souls in the Catholic Church.

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I.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR LIVING AND WORKING
IN A SUPERNATURAL SYSTEM.

Preached at SS. Philip and James, Oxford. June 5, 1865.

Ephesians iv. 4.

“There is One Body, and One Spirit.”

HERE, my brethren, is the wonderful Truth on which all the work of a Church Union must be built up. Here is the great safeguard against the peculiar sins and temptations which beset such work. Here is the grand principle of Faith which will carry us through the difficulties that lie in our path. Here is our ground and reason for hope. Here is the moving and constraining thought which should spur and urge us on to earnestness, and endurance, and perseverance.

“There is One Body, and One Spirit.”

These words tell us that we are living, and moving,

and working in a supernatural System ; nay, that we are ourselves parts of that supernatural System ; that one by one we all go to make up that gathered multitude of forces which are bearing up with heavenly might against the world around us. And this seems to me, my brethren, to be the very Truth which is most likely to act upon our Hearts in meeting the Difficulties of the Day. We need the strong spring of buoyant hope to send us forth in real godly courage to battle bravely with the sin, and corruption, and falsehood, that open out before us in the actual world in such startling contrast to the ideal of perfection that we long to reach. We need quite as much the strong sense of awe which may guard us against rashness, and unchastened eagerness in all that we do. Well, we may gather hope, the truest Christian hope ; we may learn awe—the deepest, humblest awe—from these words, “There is One Body, and One Spirit.” Do you ask me how ? I answer—Have you ever thought out what those words mean ? Of course their first, plain, simple meaning is clear to all of us. They express to us two Articles of our Creed : “I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Holy Catholic Church.” True—and I cannot doubt that you believe this. When you said the Creed just now you told God that you were ready to receive at His Word, as an undoubted truth, that there is One Holy

Ghost, and as certainly one outward and visible society of men which we call His Church. You have no doubt of this. It would be waste of time to set about proving to you that, just as St. Paul says that there is but One Unseen Spirit, so he says also as plainly that there is but One outward Body of believers. You know well that every figure by which the Church is described in Holy Scriptures shows that she is one great visible society, bound and knit together, and taking her place in such a manner in this world that her power can be felt and seen. The Church is called the Kingdom of Heaven, the House of God, the Bride of Christ, the Heavenly Jerusalem. All these names speak to us of a society clearly defined, and having a separate existence of its own, held together by certain recognised bonds of union, and easily to be distinguished from the world around. And so we find that in its actual constitution the Church is described as having its settled laws, its appointed governors, its prescribed work. We are ready, therefore, at once to admit that, if we are to be members of the Church, we are bound to act together, to profess the same faith, to agree in the doctrines that we hold, to receive the same Sacraments, to obey the same pastors. So far we acknowledge the "One Body."

But all this is not to rise above the Principles of Nature. There is no matter for Faith in this. When

we say, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," if we only mean that there is a set of men who are formed into a society bound together under fixed laws and governors and ordinances to do a common work ; why, we can see this with our eyes ; there is no mystery to be believed in all this. It is a matter of true wisdom to say that the Church must be One Body, if she is to do her work. A Kingdom divided against a Kingdom cometh to desolation ; and a house divided against a house falleth. It is absolutely impossible that a number of sects disagreeing with each other can do the work of God in this world. It is absurd to say that the Bible allows a host of warring denominations, self taught and self governed, or that it speaks of more than one True Church ; but, true as all this is, it is no more than worldly wisdom.* Where is it, then, that faith comes in ? Faith tells us what the nature of the One Body is. With our own eyes we see the outward visible Body, the Society of the one Catholic Church, existing in the world. It is before us. By study of Holy Scriptures, by history and tradition we may know what are the marks of the true Church. We may discover by observation and inquiry what is the One Body, but its hidden nature and character is matter for belief.

And what, then, is the nature and character of this

* See "Allies on Romans." Sermon xviii. *ad fin.*

one Body? It is the Body of Christ. The whole company of the baptised has been taken out of the natural order of this lower, fallen world, and lifted into a higher, supernatural, spiritual order. By the Power of the Holy Ghost the baptised have been joined and united to our Blessed Lord, so that they become One Body in, and with Him. "By One Spirit are we all baptised into one Body." So closely is the Church made one with our Blessed Lord that Holy Scripture says, "we are members of His Body," formed out "of His Flesh, and of His Bones." Yea, the Church is called Christ Himself, so entirely is it made one with Him: "as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." And again we read, "The Church is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." This, then, is what we mean when we say that we believe in the Holy Catholic Church—we receive it as an undoubted truth from God that the members of the Church, who are outwardly no more than a set of men, are yet truly and really joined to our Blessed Lord; that He has made the Church one with Himself; that He cleanses it through His Blood; takes away its sin and guilt through the atoning Power of His Cross; enriches it through His merits; clothes it with His righteousness; makes it pure with His purity. Yea,

more, we mean that He is Himself Righteousness, and Sanctification and Redemption to His Church. The power of His Nature, of His stainless and holy Humanity works on all the members of His Body, and makes them new creatures. He enlightens them with His wisdom, strengthens them with His strength, and renews them after His Own image. He is born within their souls, and formed within them. He multiplies in them likenesses of His Own holiness, and replenishes the world with off-shoots from His Own Perfect Nature, so that the Church is called the fulness, the going out into perfection of Him that filleth all in all. And yet, further, it is thus that our Blessed Lord acts upon the outer world through the Church. By the one Body which is enriched with His fulness He manifests to the world what is His Own Power, and Beauty, and Glory, and Majesty. In and through her He conquers sin, makes known His Truth, and shows what are the Perfections of the Divine Nature. And so once more our Blessed Lord is so identified with His Church that her trials are His trials, her sufferings are His sufferings, her work is His work, and her triumph is His triumph.

It is, then, in the midst of this supernatural system, dear brethren, that we are living. We are ourselves possessed with this Divine Power. The Son of God dwells in us. We are used by Him as instruments for

His Divine and loving work for the delivery of a fallen world. The Church is the One Body of Christ, instinct with His Spirit, and in her every faithful act the powers of the Godhead are going forth to exercise their mighty influence on the world of weak, suffering, and sinful humanity. Could you find a thought that ought to act with more constraining force on the members of the Church union? Let us try and see its bearings on our work.

And, first, how careful ought we to be in all Church work! If in very deed the Church is our Blessed Lord's Body, what need is there to watch lest we do harm to it, lest we hinder its work, or mar its perfection! All injury done to the Church is injury done to our Blessed Lord Himself. His own voice has taught us this. When Saul was making havoc of the Church, when he was madly bent on putting down the truth, when he was following his own head-strong will, when he was eagerly forcing his own opinions on others, when in very blindness he was led along by that most false and dangerous of all guides, an ill-instructed conscience, when he was breathing out threatenings and slaughters against those who were thwarting what seemed to him a true zeal for God, then it was that the voice of the Blessed Jesus spoke to him from heaven, and said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" He found that it was the

Lord Himself against whom he had been raging. He saw the human society with its laws, and its governors, and its opinions, as he would have called them, and he looked upon it as no more than a mere band of men and women of a certain way of thinking ; but as the light from heaven flashed upon him, and the voice from heaven fell on his startled ear, he felt what was the supernatural character of that society. To touch one member of that society was to touch the Lord to whom it belonged. To hurt it was to hurt Christ ; to oppose it was to oppose the Lord. The Church was the Body of Christ, united and bound to Him, filled with His Divine Presence, cherished by His Love, chosen as the instrument of His work ; and to persecute the Body was to persecute Him who is the head of the Body. And this, which was true then, is true now and for ever. It is a truth as eternal as the union between our Lord and His Church. Oh, weigh this truth well ; it needs to be well weighed. It should be weighed by those who oppose the Church, her faith, her laws of worship. They oppose God.

But the truth is in reality no less full of awe for those who profess to be working for the Church than for him who was so blindly working against it. Think well what it is to have to do with the Church, which is the Body of Christ Himself, Who is the Head, the Life, the moving power that works by that Body !

Blessed indeed it is to be allowed to work with our Lord by serving His Church, and carrying on His own loving purposes through her. But, oh! what if we hurt and harm the Church? What if we wound and injure the Body of our Lord? What if, living in the midst of this supernatural system, we check the working of these heavenly powers that are putting forth their influences around us? You would shrink from this. You are startled, saddened perhaps, at the thought of the possibility that you might have done this. You would be grieved beyond measure to think that there might be need for the pleading voice that checked Saul to say to you, "Why persecutest thou Me?" You feel that I am severe, harsh, unjust, in accusing you of injuring the body of our Lord. No, you do not feel that; you know that I am heart and soul with you in your work, rejoicing in your earnestness, welcoming your zeal. Why else am I here to-day? But you would ask, "How could it be that we should do harm to the Church?" Let me, then, suggest to you certain ways in which you might work against our Blessed Lord instead of working for Him, as from my heart I believe you wish to do.

1. One way of doing deadly harm to the Church is through wilfulness. One chief gain of belonging to the Church is that the very system of the Church breeds in us a spirit of obedience, submission, order,

self-denial. We have spiritual governors to obey—spiritual laws by which both governors and governed have to be ruled. On every side the Divine Authority of the Church,—the authority of God ruling us in and by His Church, touches upon our individual will, and so checks, humbles, subdues, brings it down. This would seem to be one chief part of the moral design of God in setting up His Church on earth, to train us in that true obedience from which man broke away, when he rebelled against God, and so to prepare us for the harmony and peace of the Blessed hereafter under the perfect reign of God. What else is the meaning of that name by which our Blessed Lord so often called His Church—the Kingdom of Heaven? And so the decisions of the Church in matters of Faith demand the submission of our Intellect. The rules of the Church in matters of Divine worship demand the submission of our Will. The sacred bonds of brotherhood in the Church demand the submission of our Affections. The whole man, body and soul, in outward act and inward feeling, is trained to forget, to subdue self; to live for others and for God. So much is this so, that if any man neglect to hear the Church, he is to be counted as a heathen man and a publican,—he puts himself out of the pale of that Society, whose governing principle is obedience; by the spirit of rebellion he outlaws himself from that

supernatural Kingdom, wherein the blessings of heaven are pledged to those who are living as the subjects of the King of heaven.

If this be so, then, what deadly harm must be done by wilfulness in all matters that have to do with the faith of the Church, or with her outward acts of worship! Should we not be most careful to watch with the true-hearted obedience of loyal sons against the least approach to errors which the Church condemns? Should we not shun the use of devotional forms, and be careful not to take part in religious ceremonies which set forth those errors? This, at least, seems to be no more than an act of simple obedience to the authority which the Church of God has over us. We surely peril the well-being of the Body of Christ if we do not act thus.

But, further, are we not bound to follow with an exact obedience the laws which the Church has laid down for our acts of worship? What is to be said of individual caprice, eccentricities, and irregularities, novelties, and unauthorised additions to the Church's settled rules for the performing of her sacred offices? Do not such things destroy all real harmony and agreement, and break down the spirit of obedience and submission? Do they not offend and wound the minds of many faithful members of the Church? Do they not hurt the Church? And, if so,

do they not hinder our Blessed Lord's own work? And, oh, dear brethren, would not a deep sense, a lively faith that the Church is His Body restrain us from following our own fancies and inclinations? Could any man dare to play with error, to amuse himself with novelties, to tamper with what is forbidden, to trifle in his talk at the risk of grieving or misleading others, if he felt that by such recklessness he was doing harm to the Body of Christ? Imagine only the love of our Blessed Lord for His Church. Bring home to your own minds the tender interest with which He watches over each weak member of it. Remember that as a man nourisheth and cherisheth his own flesh so our Lord nourishes and cherishes His Church. Think how He yearns over it, how He is ready to set it free from every sin, and failing, till there is neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing left upon it to spoil its beauty. Contemplate our Lord's longing to cleanse every sinful soul through His Blood, and to perfect every feeble soul through His Grace. Think what it would be if the veil were lifted for a moment from your eyes and you could see the secret working of that Divine system by which the members of the Body of Christ are drawing from their Head the powers that are in Himself, Wisdom by which to know God and His Truth, and Holiness by which to serve God, and Love by which to cleave to Him,

and then imagine what you would feel if you found that you were checking the flow of these graces, and hindering the blessed working of the Life of Christ in His Body! Ah, brethren, think of this, and see how full of awe is the work we do, how full of vast interest are the words we speak, in the Church of Christ! In a moment of excitement an act of extravagance is soon done. In the heat of an argument a startling paradox is soon thrown out. In the strife of one mind with another, or in a paper war, a sharp, biting, clever retort is soon made. In hunting after novelties there is a momentary enjoyment in the freshness of some strange ceremony. But what if one and all of these do harm to the Body of Christ? What if they split heart from heart,—what if they help to hide the truth which Christ would teach to the poor, blind world,—what if they chill the love with which He would warm all souls,—what if they are a resisting of the Powers of Heaven and a strengthening of the Powers of Hell? Who would not cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye rather than offend one of Christ's little ones, and wound the Body of the Lord? Oh, take this loving warning, dear brethren, and weigh well the issue of the slightest word or act which you speak or do as members of the Body of Christ.

2. But enough of warnings. I have uttered these only lest your great, and high, and holy work should be

marred,—or rather lest our dear Lord's work through you should fail of being done to His joy and yours. Let us turn to the hope and comfort which is to be found for us in the text. If to know that the Church is the Body of Christ may well make us enter on all Church work with awe, and reverence, and care, yet that awe will be mixed with a calm and holy gladness, and that reverence and care will grow up into a firm and quiet trustfulness. What earnest Churchman among us has not felt the anxieties of our times press upon him? Who has not looked back to what seemed in the distance, which hid from us their defects, better and purer times, and sighed over the contrast with the evils of our own days? Who has not mourned over the breach of the Church's godly rules, the neglect of her holy seasons, the low tone of life, the irreverence of acts of worship, the want of discipline, the decay of sacred learning, the growth of false doctrine, the unblushing boldness of unbelief? Who has not almost been tempted to think that the flood of ungodliness must prevail? Who has not at times grown weary with the struggle to stem the tide, and felt that he might as well swim with the stream? Alas! do we not miss from our ranks those that have been carried away with its force? And what, then, is the one thought in the strength of which to stand firm? Faith in the Presence of our Lord with His

Church. "There is one Body and one Spirit." Once more, we live, we move, we work, we are worked upon, in a supernatural system. The work that we are seeking to do is not our work—it is the work of God. The Faith which we would fain see preserved whole and undefiled, it is not our faith, it is the faith taught by God ; the faith not invented by, but delivered to, the Saints ; the faith which could not be kept pure by our unaided efforts, but which may be kept by the Holy Ghost, Which dwelleth in us. The holiness which we long to see spread amongst men, it is no mere ideal of perfection which we have imagined for ourselves, it is the holiness of the character of our Blessed Lord, which He lived out in our nature on earth, which He lives now to impart to us. The Church itself is not "our Church." Perish the very phrase which robs the Church of its Divine character, which robs our Lord of what belongs to Him, and not to us. The Church is Christ's, it is the One Body in which the One Spirit dwells.

Oh, go forth, dear brethren, in the strength of this thought, to enter on the plans, the labours, the trials, the contests, the sufferings of another year of the work of your union for the good of the Church of Christ. Be watchful, be wary, for you are acting on behalf of the holiest of all holy things, the Body of your Lord. Be specially on your guard against the

creeping in of thoughts of self. Make sure that you are acting with a single eye to the glory of your Lord. See that your work is such as you can safely offer to Him. Then lean on His Power with the calm certainty that He at least cannot fail. The miseries of this sinful world touch even our hearts. Ah, they touch His heart far more; they are an appeal to Him for the comfort and peace which He can give. The blindness of those who have lost this Truth saddens us. Ah, it saddens Him far more; it is an appeal to him to shed abroad the light of truth in His Church. The sins of those who have wandered away from God are a grief to us. Ah, what must they be to Him, who was pierced on the Cross to take away those very sins? As certainly as the Church is the Body of our Lord, so surely He feels for its every sorrow, and mourns for its every imperfection, and marks each single sin that spoils it. And as certainly as the One Spirit dwells in the One Body, so by that Spirit is the Church made one with Christ, and all the Power, and Grace, and Love of our Lord is pledged to the Church for her deliverance. The cause of the Church is the cause of Christ. The victories of the Church are His victories. Yea, the perfection of the Church is His Perfection. Oh, thrice blessed he, then, who can do work for our dear Lord in His Church, if it were but to increase to her

the food of life, or to clothe her in greater holiness, or to restore her to strength, or to break off only one shackle from her, so that to him the Lord Himself might say at the last: "I was hungry and ye gave Me meat; naked and ye clothed Me; sick and in prison and ye visited Me; inasmuch as ye did it unto my Body, ye did it unto Me."

II.

THE PERIL OF RESTRAINING THE SPIRIT'S
WORK IN THE CHURCH.

Preached in the church of St. Giles, Graffham. Whitsunday,
1866.

I Thessalonians v. 19.

“Quench not the Spirit.”

THIS was the day on which our Blessed Lord was pleased to send down God the Holy Ghost to be with the Church. And so we are met together to thank God for His goodness in sending His Blessed Spirit to help us, and to see what our duties are to that Blessed Spirit. Ah, brethren, perhaps none of us know what we owe to God the Holy Ghost.

Those who have been too careless to watch their own hearts and lives of course have no notion how much the Holy Ghost has done for them. If you would but see it, how He has tried to check

you! Many and many a thing you have done against God. You condemn yourselves for these things. You feel that you have not been what you should have been to God. You wish that you were very different from what you are. You see the blackness of your own ways, but you do not know how much worse you might have been if God the Holy Ghost had not held you back. In how many ways has He warned you, and made you feel the harm of sin! When you have not thought of Him at all, how has He thought of you! When you have grieved God much, how has the Blessed Spirit kept you from giving up God altogether! You have no notion how He has worked on your souls to bring them to God:—and so it is good to have a day like this to think what the work of God the Holy Ghost is. And is not this a good thing also for the most earnest? Even amongst those who do think how good the Holy Ghost is, how loving, how tender, who will say that he thinks enough of what that Blessed Spirit does in his heart? How He comforts us in trouble! How He strengthens us in temptation! How He makes us hate what is bad! How He stirs us up to love God! How He opens our eyes to see the good things that God gives to those who love Him! How He lifts our hearts above the world! How He fixes them on God! Even those who see

the most of what the Holy Ghost does for them see only a very small part of the wonders that He works in the soul. So it must be good for all to have a day like this on which we can calmly, quietly, and thankfully go over in our minds some of the proofs that the Holy Ghost has given us of His tender love.

I. And now there are some things, of course, which we all know at once.

I. We know that the Holy Ghost is God, and so He has all the Strength and Power of God. What He pleases to do He can do. None can stand against Him. This is of the greatest possible comfort to us, because we have enemies that are too strong for us ; but no enemy is strong enough to hurt us if the Spirit of God is on our side. And, again, as the Holy Ghost is God, so He has that wonderful power of working on the heart which belongs to God. And yet, again, as God is love, so the very nature of the Holy Ghost is all love and tenderness. This is what He is by nature. There is nothing that He cannot do. There is nothing that He cannot see. He reads us through and through. His eye pierces us. He sees every thought and feeling that passes through our minds. He knows well every grief we ever feel, every danger that threatens us. He understands our weakness and our wants. And He yearns to comfort and to help us, and cares for us as only God can care

for His creatures. This at least we know about the Holy Ghost.

2. And we know also something of the way in which the Holy Ghost works. He dwells in the Church. His work is done upon those who belong to the Church. This was our Blessed Lord's Own Promise: "He dwelleth with you and shall be in you." This was what St. Paul declared: "Know ye not that your body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost, Which is in you, Which ye have of God?" What the soul of each one of us is to our body, that the Holy Ghost is to the Church. As the soul lives in our body, and works through it, so that it gives life to all the parts of the body, so the Holy Ghost lives in the Church, and gives spiritual life to each one of us who belongs to the Church, so that we are able by the Power of the Spirit to live to God. Again, as my soul only gives life to my own body, and cannot give life to yours, so the Holy Ghost only gives life to the One Church which is the Body of Christ. Those who do not belong to the Church have no promise that the Holy Ghost will work in them. "There is One Body and One Spirit." There is one Church, and in that One Church is the One Spirit of God. Again, the Holy Ghost works through the ordinances of the Church. The Church is called "the ministration of the Holy Spirit." What the Holy Spirit

gives, He is pleased to give through the ordinances of the Church. At our Baptism he puts the first beginning of life into our souls, for then we are "born again of water and the Spirit"; then, by the "One Spirit we are all baptised into the One Body." At Confirmation He strengthens that life in us, for, when the Bishop's hands are laid on us, we receive the Holy Ghost. In Holy Communion He refreshes our souls, for then we "all drink into One Spirit." So those who belong to the Church have this Blessed Spirit ready to work upon them. We are within reach of His influence. We are brought very close to Him. We may find Him if we will. He is amongst us, though we do not see Him.

3. And now, one thing more about His work we may learn from the text—this Spirit is like a Fire to the Heart of Man. Can we doubt why He is so called? Fire gives warmth and light. Is not this exactly the character of the work of the Holy Ghost? What is colder than the heart of fallen man towards God? How little does he see of the love of God to him! How does God lavish His blessings on us! and what do we care for Him? What good things does He heap on us! Life, and food, and health, and strength, and His daily guardian care, and how much do we care for Him? What riches of mercy does God offer us for the soul! Pardon, and peace,

and grace, and everlasting life: and what return of love do we make for all this? Who then warms the cold heart of man into real love for God? It is God the Holy Ghost by whom the love of God is shed abroad in the heart. Again, what is darker than the heart of man? Always ready to go wrong; blind as to what is really for his good; catching at some worldly gain which cannot last, and throwing away the blessings of heaven; bent on gaining the world which is to be burnt up, and reckless about losing his soul, which is to last for ever. And who pours light into those poor, dark hearts of ours? Who makes us see that God is the true portion of the soul? Who strips off the tinsel and glitter from the toys of earth? Who takes the film from our eyes and shows us that one moment's true love for God makes a man more happy than all the treasures of the world? It is God the Holy Ghost. We "have an unction from the Holy One, and we know all things."

This, then, is something of that which we know about God the Holy Ghost. With all the power, and all the strength, and all the love of God, He lives, and moves, and works in the Holy Church of Christ to bless us. He is as a living Fire amongst us to warm us into the love of God. He is a Light in the midst of this poor, dark world—yea, in the midst of our poor, dark hearts, to show us what God

is to us, what we should be to God, what is our real danger, and what is our true bliss.

II. And now see what St. Paul tells us not to do: "Quench not the Spirit." This mighty, loving Spirit of God—He is like a fire amongst you. His strange power is like a flame which glows, and burns around and within you, and which would kindle into flame all which it touches. Do not put out the glowing Fire of the Spirit of Love. The Presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church is like a fair, shining light. Its rays fall on all hearts. It touches, it gilds, it beautifies all souls. It gives them a new fairness, like the rays of the sun which light up the whole landscape, making each separate leaf to glisten as it dances in the light, and bathing hill and valley, wood and meadow, in its glow. Do not choose darkness rather than light. "Quench not the Spirit." Brethren, is not this a strange, fearful power which the Apostle hints at here? Here in the Church, here amongst us who are the people of God, there lives, and moves, and walks, the Blessed Spirit of God, with all His Power to touch the heart, to win it to God, to change it—and we have power to stop His work. If we choose, we may say, I will not be changed, I will not give up my icy coldness of soul, I will not be thawed into love, I will go on in the hard-bound frost of my own selfishness, I will go my own way, I will care for

myself, live for myself. The fire of the Holy Ghost may burn in me, and around me, but I will quench it. We have the power to do this. We may keep our coldness of heart towards God, and shut out the blessed influences of the Spirit of God. Or again, we may live within the clear shining of the light of the Knowledge of God, and yet refuse to know Him. The Spirit of God may give us light in the Holy Scriptures, and we may refuse to read them at all, or read them without learning to know God and ourselves. The Spirit of God may give us light in the Church, which is the pillar and ground of the Truth, and we may determine not to see what the Church tells us to believe and to do. And so we may put out the light which would lead us to God and to heaven.

“Quench not the Spirit”—how deep, how full the words are! How do they tell of the mighty, living Presence that is with us! What wonders of Power, of Love, of Tenderness do they bring before us! Yet what wonders do they show that we may do in the working out of our own self-chosen misery! He is here, and yet we may despise Him if we will, and perish in His very Presence.

III. But this is not all, there is another thing to mark here, before we shall have drawn out the full meaning of the Apostle. When was it that he used those few startling words of warning, “Quench not the Spirit”? It

was when the Holy Ghost had been doing great things for the Church. See what his next words are, "Despise not prophesyings." We have here the key-note of the warning. In those days the Holy Ghost gave a special power to some men to teach and warn others ; and this teaching was called prophesying. This was the way in which the Holy Spirit showed His Love. He was trying to kindle men into the love of God, to lead them on to know more of God. His Fire was burning with no common glow. His Light was shining out with a strange brightness. What were the members of the Church to do? Listen to their teachers, you will say ; make good use of those great blessings of the Spirit. True, most true. But see what St. Paul says. He says more than this : "Quench not the Spirit." What does he mean? The loving Spirit of God is longing to work amongst you. His heart is set upon you. He is opening out the treasures of His goodness in the midst of you. Oh, take care that you do not check Him. He will act to you as you act to Him. Just as fire cannot burn in a damp, unwholesome atmosphere—as there are places underground where the air is so foul that a candle will go out at once—so, if you choke the Heavenly Fire, it will go out. The Holy Ghost will not work in the midst of cold, careless, worldly, unbelieving hearts : "Quench not the Spirit."

See how strange this is! See how it brings out that the Holy Ghost is a real, living Person, and has to do with us as one man has to do with another. His work will be checked if it is not welcomed. It was the same with our Blessed Lord. We read of Him that in one place "He could there do no mighty work." He was ready to help the sick and the suffering, we cannot doubt that He longed to do it; but something drove His acts of mercy back into His Own Spirit. "He could there do no mighty work, because of their unbelief." His love was restrained because of the coldness of those amongst whom He was. Their cold hearts were like a sharp frosty air, which keeps back the bursting of the trees and flowers. The sap is there, rising, working, almost thrusting the leaves out, but the chill air drives it in.

We see the same thing amongst ourselves. If there is some matter in which we take a great interest, we can speak of it at once to those who understand us and enter into our feelings. There are some persons to whom we could scarcely mention it—"they quench our spirit." So in preaching a Priest can speak at once to those who care for what he says. If he speaks amongst those who love God, who love the Faith, his whole heart is opened out to them, his words flow out. A mere look, a glance of the eye, a sign of interest is like fuel ready for the fire of his

own warmth. On the other hand, unbelief, indifference, carelessness checks a teacher at once. It quenches his spirit. Here, then, is a very wonderful part of the meaning of St. Paul's words, "Quench not the Spirit." That Blessed Spirit of God is working amongst you. You see, you feel the tokens of His love. But he is close to you as your own soul. It is as though He laid His Heart on yours. His Heart beats with love for you, and He is listening for your heart to beat in answer to His. Oh, "quench not the Spirit." Do not disappoint, do not chill, do not check Him. You know not what He will do, if you will only follow Him. There is no saying what blessed truths He will teach you ; what strength He will give you, what new love He will pour into you, what new powers He will grant you. Only, all depends on what you show yourself to Him. "Quench not the Spirit."

IV. And now see, my dear brethren, what this has to do with us. We have the Holy Ghost amongst us. Every day, every hour His work is going on. As we might see one of our friends going wrong, and might set ourselves to lead him to God, so the Holy Ghost sets Himself to lead us to God. As a living Person He sets Himself to touch and move our hearts. By the words which we read in our Bibles, by the words which the ministers of God speak

to us, by His Own secret Voice speaking to us in our souls, the Holy Ghost tries to stir us to the love of God. And we make this loving, tender Companion rejoice if we follow Him. We sadden Him if we will not be led by Him.

But, more than this, there have been times in the History of the Church from the first when the Holy Ghost has worked with a special love and power in the Church. He did so when St. Paul wrote. Then the Spirit was moving men, and teaching them great things. We have seen that the danger was lest men should prevent the Spirit from carrying on His work, lest they should quench Him by their coldness. Brethren, I ask you earnestly, solemnly, is not this a time when the Holy Ghost is seeking to light up the Fire of love for God in His Church? Look at the change which has passed over that part of the Church to which we belong. See what calls we have to lead a more holy, a more earnest, a more religious life. See what helps are given to us for the service of God. The country has been covered with schools for teaching the young. The little ones of the Church are constantly catechised in the House of God. Great pains are taken to bring out the meaning of the Holy truths which our Blessed Lord taught. The Churches are opened more and more often for the worship of God. The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Com-

munion is far more often celebrated than it used to be. In all these ways the love of God for us, the love of Christ for us, the Power of Christ to cleanse the soul, the strength of His grace to change the soul—all, in fact, which can draw the heart of God—is being pressed upon us. So great a change has been passing over the Church that even those who are not outwardly in communion with us have said, “the Church is becoming more vigorous and influential every day. She has not been more active for good, nor stronger, for many centuries. Her words, and her work are before God.” Who is doing this? Who is working in the Church of England? Who is working amongst and upon us? I cannot doubt that this is the work of the Holy Ghost. It is He who is making the Fire of love burn that it may warm our souls. It is He who is making the Light of Truth shine, that it may lead us in God’s way. He is waiting, watching, longing to bless us. He is ready to bless the Church, perhaps more fully than He has ever done yet. He is ready to pour His benefits upon us, to make us know more of God and of His Truth than we have ever known, to make us love God more, live for Him more, give ourselves to Him more, have His gifts given to us in more abundant fulness. Brethren, what are we doing? It is in our power to drive back all this love of the Spirit. We may stop His work. We

may damp the Fire that He would kindle in the Church. We may make up our minds that we will not do any more for God's sake. We may live for the world, and go after the world, instead of living for God and heaven. We may let the Church be opened, but never care to go and offer our prayers there. We may see the Holy Table spread, but neglect to take the Blessed Food which is offered us there for our souls. We may hear the ministers of God press us to live for God, and we may shut our ears to what they say. Or, almost worse, we may come to the Church and mock God with a lip worship. We may receive Christ and not live by Him, or grow into His likeness. We may hear the Word of God, praise it, and be living contradictions to it. We may move in the midst of all the outward signs of solemn Catholic worship which testify that God is here, present to work amongst us; and refuse to acknowledge that presence in the soul by submitting the will to Him. And so we may quench the Spirit, and make Him give up in sadness the blessed work that He is now ready to do.

Oh, God forbid! Let us not do this. If we have done it, let us do it no more. No, brethren, close with the offer of the Spirit of God. Receive Him as a Friend amongst you, as the truest Friend of the soul. Welcome His work. Follow as He leads.

Use the means of grace which he offers. Make Him the loved and honoured Guest of the Church. Catch at the least warning that He gives you. Gather up every hint by which He would lead you nearer to God. If warnings come, break off the sins which He shows you. If He invites you to a more earnest life, let Him draw you on. You know not how He will increase His gifts to you, if you let Him see that you value them. You know not what a work He will do within you. The spark of love for God that now only just glimmers in your soul will glow day by day moré and more, as the Fire of the Holy Ghost burns within you. The light of the knowledge of God will shine more and more in your mind, till it reaches the perfect day. It is written of those on whom the Holy Ghost works that they are changed into the very image and likeness of Christ, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord. It is written again of those who follow the guidance of God, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." I dare not attempt to say all that is meant by those words, but at least they must mean as much as this,—Whatever peace is to be found in serving God, or whatever happiness He can give,—whatever God can do for the soul in cleansing, strengthening, cheering, comforting it,—whatever God can be to the soul,—that shall be known by those who make it the one object of life to

know Him. Until His "Loving Spirit has led us forth into the land of righteousness" we shall never know fully what this is. Then we shall see that "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

III.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST WITHIN US.

Preached at Chichester Cathedral. October 25, 1866.

Acts x. 38.

“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power : Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him.”

WHAT an account we have here of our Blessed Lord's Life ! How short it is, and yet how full ! “He went about doing good.” Brethren, if you or I had passed beyond this world, could we ask for a better epitaph to be written over our grave than this, “He went about doing good ?” If we were taken away from those who know us, could we wish that they should express their love, their regrets, their fond remembrance of us, in better words than these, “He went about doing good” ? If our last hour were

come, and our souls had gone forth from the body, and were presented before God to be judged, what a joy would it be to us if He, Who treasures in His mind every act of love done by His Saints, should say of us, "He went about doing good."

And this was the epitaph of our blessed Lord, though it was written over One Who had left His grave empty when He rose from the dead. It was the record of the fond remembrance of one of the closest friends of our Lord who had watched and witnessed His unceasing acts of love. Nay, more, it was the witness borne to Him even by those who came about Him to find fault with Him. His tenderness and loving-kindness drew from them, almost in spite of themselves, the wondering confession: "He hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." And so, when our Lord had withdrawn His visible Presence from the world, where He had been the One True Light shining in the world's darkness,—this was the sentence revealed by the Spirit to St. Peter, and passed by the Father on the completed Life of the Son in Whom He had been so well pleased: "He went about doing good."

Brethren, how strangely fair is this Picture of our Blessed Lord! I know not whether it will move your hearts, as it seems to move my own. But there

seems to me to be a singular power in these words to attract, and draw us to the Blessed Jesus. They win our trust, our confidence, our faith. They melt us into love for our Lord. They fix our souls on Him, Who in all the miseries, and trials, and dangers of the world is our One Refuge.

Look at the words, and try to draw out something of their meaning for yourselves.

I. See, first, how the full, free, unselfish—say rather the self-sacrificing love of our Lord comes out in this description of Him. “He went about doing good,” He was the Benefactor of all around Him. He lived to spend Himself on others. His days were so passed. He travelled through the cities and villages to carry on a constant course of teaching. Sometimes He spoke to the people in masses and congregations. We read of their pressing on Him to hear the word of God, and of there being so many coming and going that He had no leisure so much as to eat. Sometimes He dealt with souls one by one. He was ever enlightening, and encouraging, and cheering, and lifting men from earth to heaven, from themselves to God. But, more than this, He was continually relieving the sorrows and sufferings of those around Him. He took away the foulness of the leper who fled to Him in his misery. He opened the blind eye. He unsealed the deaf ear. He gave new strength to

the palsied limbs. He drove out the burning fever from the parched body. Love and mercy were stored up in Him as in a Fountain which was ever welling and bursting forth, and spreading life and blessing around Him. And men felt this. They learnt that they had in Him One to whom they could appeal. They could reckon on an answer to their groans and cries of anguish in the heart of the Son of Man. This is brought out by what we read of the multitude who thronged upon Him, and pressed on Him to touch Him, when virtue went out of Him to heal those that touched Him.

So He moved about in the world, taking away its woes. He lived for others in continual labours of love. He toiled even to weariness in giving rest to the weary and heavy-laden. He even denied Himself retirement, and calm, and solitude that He might be at the call of others. He was obliged to use the night or the early morning for those secret communings in which He leaned His worn spirit on His Father's love,—because all through the day He made Himself the servant of those who were sinking under their loads of suffering. So “He went about doing good.” I ask you especially to notice this, because we are apt to lose the thought of this life of suffering, enduring, persevering love, in the more amazing thought of the Death on the Cross, in which this Love

mounted to its full height. The wonder of that Death, both in its suffering, and in its power to cleanse, throws almost all else into the background. Yet, oh, brethren, mark the toiling life of love also.

2. And, now, see next what it was that seems especially to have drawn forth the love that was in our Blessed Lord. "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." Let me ask you especially to mark here what a yoke it was that was pressing on the galled shoulders of humanity! We are indeed touching on great mysteries, but we must not pass over the strange and pregnant word that has been used here by the Holy Ghost. The special work of love which our Lord had set Himself to do was to heal those who had been brought under the tyranny and thralldom of the Evil One. Alas! there was a dynasty of evil in the world. We know not how this could be. We cannot understand how rebellion, and wickedness, and the force and cruelty of sin could break in upon the order, and purity, and peace, and love, and bliss which belongs to God. But we see that it has done so. On every side of us we see sickness and pain, and agony, and ruined powers, and decay, and death. The evil works around us, and within us. Did you ever stop to marvel at the many forms of suffering that rack the bodies and even destroy the minds of men? Did

you ever take up a book of medical treatises, and shut it up almost in bewildered horror at the confusing multitude of diseases of which it speaks? So various are the forms of suffering that attack us that, as you know, there are departments of medical science which are concerned with the treatment of one limb, or the variations of one disease. Did you ever ask yourself how this is? Can it be that the inventiveness of the powers of evil, with all their keenness of science and malice, is put forth to torture the bodies of men? At least we have strange hints of this in the history of the suffering woman of whom our Blessed Lord expressly said that Satan had bound her with the chains of her peculiar malady for eighteen years. And it may be that the very difficulty of distinguishing between madness and actual possession arises from the working of the Evil One in all forms of suffering. We know for a certainty that it was when man broke away from God, and yielded to the temptations of the devil, that all the flood of sorrow and affliction poured in upon him. The worst of all his misery, no doubt, was the sin that worked in his soul. Here his slavery to the Evil One most galled him. But every outward form of pain was a mark of the dominion of the devil, and so the text speaks of all sufferers alike as being under the yoke of that dynasty of hate and anguish. The world had become a house of bondage,

and the cries of the oppressed mounted up into the ear of the Redeemer.

3. And now, with this thought in your minds, see what fuller light is thrown on the words, "He went about doing good." Our Blessed Lord was made man. He took His Place in the ranks of His Own creatures. He came into this world so full of misery. He lived in the midst of these sorrows and sufferings, as One of the race on whom they had fallen. He is surrounded by all the forms of anguish. The world is one vast hospital, full of the sick, the diseased, the suffering, and the Blessed Jesus walks through it. Oh, imagine what He must have felt! On all sides of Him are grief, and woe, and agony. The multiplied forms of pain sadden His eye, wherever He turns. Yes, but more, far more than this. His is an eye that can pierce within into the inner mind. He can not only count every throb and pang that works in the agonised frame, but He can see how this tells upon the feeble spirits of the sufferer, and tries, and wears, and wastes it. More than this, He can see the hidden powers of Satan and his angels working out their purposes of cruelty on mankind. More still, He reads the hidden meaning of this parable of suffering. He knows how every outward and visible form of bodily anguish is only a sign and sacrament of the more deadly harm that the devil is trying to work in

the soul. And with all this working in His mind—or rather ever present to Him in one clear, defined vision—He hears every sigh from every sick-bed, every groan that bursts from every sufferer worn beyond the powers of endurance. He lived, He moved in the midst of this. Could we imagine what He must have felt? What is it to us, who are not used to such sights, to pay only one visit to the wards of an hospital? Do we not wonder at those who have strength and nerve to work in the midst of the sick and suffering? What must it have been to our Lord, then, to live in the midst of a world which to His eye was one vast gathering of sufferers! And yet add to this, that He was the God Who had made man. Every pang that shot through every frame smote on His Spirit as it could only smite on Him Who knew what man might have been, and what he was.

4. But even here we must add this further wonder and mystery; He knew in His Own Person what suffering was. He was God. Yes; and so every separate sorrow was seen by Him. But He was man also, and He had had His share of pain. He had known what it was to be cold—perhaps to ache with cold, in the stable at Bethlehem. He had known what it was to be weak with the pangs of hunger, to be parched with the fever of thirst, to be faint with weariness. No disease could have worked in

that sacred Body, for His whole nature was pure ; but all forms of suffering that can come from without He bowed Himself to bear. He was in all points tempted like as we are. And so this very compassion must have moved Him to enter into all that was afflicting those around Him.

5. And now, then, we are ready to understand how it was that "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." This was so, because "God was with Him." He was One with the Father. The living Father had sent Him, and He lived by the Father. He was One in nature, One in mind, One in being with God. "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." And just then because our Blessed Lord was God, He could not be in His Own world, and leave that world to its miseries. His love could not be pent up. His Power could not be kept in. The Life of God that was in Him must show itself in acts such as God would do. "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him."

Such is the short history of our Blessed Lord's life and work on earth.

And now see what we should learn from this.

I. What a light this throws on the miracles of our Blessed Lord ! We are too apt to look at the miracles as if they were only works of wonderful power, which

set their seal upon the truth of what our Lord taught. They were indeed works of Power, but they were also works of Love. They were acts of the tenderness of a Redeeming God Who was relieving the miseries of His suffering creatures. And then see what an answer we have here to those who tell us that there cannot be miracles, because such acts are interferences with the course of nature. We may almost say that when God the Son came into the world there must have been miracles, just because they *were* interferences with the course of nature. For with what nature did they interfere? Was it with the pure and perfect nature of this world of creatures, and of man, as it left the hands of God? No, it was with a fallen, shattered, corrupted, ruined, diseased, disjointed, suffering nature that our Lord had to do when He put forth His miraculous power. Was it any wonder that He should interfere with this? Wonder it was; but it was a wonder only that His love was so great as to stoop to rescue a world that had rebelled against Him. When He had once, in His vast pity, taken upon Him to be made man, and so to interfere with the ruined nature of man by raising it into union with Himself, all else that He did was almost to be looked for. It would have been an interference with His own nature if He had moved in the midst of the sighs, and groans, and agonies of His creatures, and

yet His acts of love had not shown that He was ready to set them free from their sorrows. The most astounding of all miracles would have been if He had worked no miracles. As surely as fire must throw out heat, so the love of God must have gone forth to undo the evil that was torturing the world which He came to redeem. And therefore "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." *

II. And see, my dear brethren, next, why I press this upon you. What a comfort it is to us! The miseries of the world have not ceased. No, nor have the miracles of Christ. Still He lives, He moves, He works amongst us. He is present with us in His Church to do good, and to heal all that are oppressed of the devil. Ah, the miseries of the heart are an appeal to His Redeeming Love every day, every hour now; and all the works of love which He once did on the suffering bodies of men are only specimens of that supernatural work of grace which He does now on our suffering souls. Still virtue is ever going forth from Him to heal those who touch Him by faith. The blind eye is opened by Him to see and know God—the love and the fairness of God. The deaf ear is unstopped to hear the voice of God.

* See the Preface to Archbishop Trench on the Miracles of our Lord. He calls them "Redemptive Acts."

The weak and palsied heart draws strength from Him to walk in the ways of God. The stained, leprous man is made clean through Him. Yea, the very dead in soul is made to live again with the life of Christ in it. These are the miracles which are worked in the kingdom of the grace and love of our Blessed Lord.

III. But what a question does this truth open out to us! What is the one hope of the soul? Union with Christ. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, and the spirit is life because of righteousness." If we are one with Christ, then guilt, and sin, and weakness, and suffering, and misery, and corruption will pass away from us. If we are one with Christ, God will be with us, we shall be partakers of the Divine Nature, and the evil of sin will be healed in us. But how are we to know if God is with us? If the life of God works in our souls, it will show itself by our doing what the Son of God did—"He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him." Most surely these words have a special bearing on ourselves. We are like our Blessed Lord in one point undoubtedly. We are men, as He is man. Like Him, then, we cannot but feel for the suffering. We know what pain, and sickness, and weakness is. We can at least guess what it would be to be left in the hours of agony, or disease, to suffer or to waste away un-

aided, un comforted, unrelieved. We can well imagine all that aggravates sickness to the poor, as we remember how hard it was for us to endure one hour of pain with all that we had at hand to soothe and comfort us. We can feel, then, for others, pity others. But, after all, this is only to show that we are men.

Brethren, remember, I implore you, that we claim to be more than men. We claim to be one with God, to be members of Christ,—to be ruled and guided by His Spirit. And, if this be so, then we shall do more than feel for others,—we shall act, we shall suffer, we shall sacrifice ourselves for them. There was a Divine Restlessness in our Blessed Lord. The Life of God in Him could not be still. It moved, it urged him to go about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed with the devil. So it must be with us. If the life of God is in us, it will stir us to do our utmost to relieve those who are suffering round us.

Think, then, of this to-day. A very special call is made on you to take part in lightening the sufferings of the sick. There is great need of large self-denying alms to carry on the work of the Infirmary, whose cause I have been called upon to plead. What will you do? If the pulses of the Divine Life still beat in your soul, you will be glad by a real loving effort to join in the blessed work of your Lord in lessening the miseries of the world.

Yes ! mark, I beseech you, those words. You are asked to join in doing the very work of our Lord—to do it with Him, and for Him—"Bear ye one another's burthen, and so fulfil the law of Christ." He is relieving those that are oppressed of the devil, and He asks you to join with Him. The groans of each sufferer that tosses in pain on the bed of sickness, the sighs of those that are being worn out by disease, go up into His ear,—and our Lord comes to us to-day, and points to them and says, "Look, then, will you go about with Me, and undo this misery ? These all belong to Me, will you relieve them for My sake ? You must suffer if you would really relieve them ; you must cut off from your own pleasures ; but, 'ah, so did I ! See what I suffered, and yet the joy of saving others was greater than the suffering,—will not you enter into My joy ?" And then the Form of Jesus rises before our eyes on the Cross, worn, wasted, bleeding, pierced, naked, dying. He has given up all—His Life, Himself. And for whom ? For us, to cleanse us, to save us, to relieve us who were oppressed of the devil. And He seems to whisper in His dying words : "For the joy that was before Me—the joy of saving thee—I endured the Cross" ; and then He says again : "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

And at those words the world seems to pass away.

A Judgment-seat is set, and there is One on it. He has the marks of suffering still,—but they are shining with glory ; and He is welcoming those who have suffered with Him in relieving those who were oppressed by the devil. His eye beams on them with the welcome of love, as He says, “I was sick and ye visited Me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least My Brethren, ye have done it unto me. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Give then, give now to Him what you will wish to have given in that hour !

IV.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF OBEDIENCE.

Preached at All Saints, Margaret Street. March 23, 1865.

St. John xiii. 17.

“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

YOU know well, my brethren, Who spoke these words. They were spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. They were spoken by God upon earth. Master this thought to begin with this morning, so far as we can master it; for it really is a tremendous thought. These words fell from the lips of Him Who was God as well as Man—and before He spoke them they were in His mind as a thought, and so we have here one of the thoughts of God put before us. And, as the thought came out of that mind in which were hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge, so this thought

must be the most true, real, wise thought that could be made known to us. I am almost afraid to say that we can trust it, depend upon it, feel certain of its truth—for this seems so like judging and criticising it, where we ought to adore and wonder at the goodness of Him Who has been pleased to speak to us.

Imagine how we should feel about these words if they were the only words that we knew of that had come directly from God to us! How we should prize them, look into them, try and draw out their full meaning, and long to have them written upon our very hearts! Surely they are not less valuable to us because in His wondrous mercy God has spoken to us so fully again and again.

Let us begin at once by saying to ourselves, "Here in these words my God speaks to me; He who knows everything, every secret of His Being and of mine; He before Whom my heart, my life, my dangers, my trials, all lie clear and manifest as in an open book, He tells me what He knows."

And, then, next, let us notice that it is about ourselves that He speaks to us.

And, then, that He really answers here the one great question that concerns us more than any other.

If we master this, we shall surely be ready to listen with all earnestness to what our Blessed Lord says here.

2. But you will perhaps say, "What is the one great question?" There seem to be so many great questions in our day, for which we are driven to find answers. Yes—for instance, what would you say seems to you to be the great question of the day? Perhaps you would say that it is, How we are to find a remedy for all the great social evils of our time. Or, if your mind naturally turns in that direction, you might say that the question that is pressing for an answer is, How we are to find a way through all the growing intricacies of foreign politics. Or possibly, if you have not patient faith enough to wait for due inquiry to work out its results, you may be over-eager to know how what God has taught us in His Word and by His Church agrees with what appear for the present to be the conclusions of scientific investigation. Or the question of the day to you may seem to be, What is truth? What has God really told us about Himself and ourselves? What are we to believe? Or, again, the very difficulty of this last question may have forced you to ask, How does God speak to my soul? Is there on earth any living authority which has a right to propound the truth, and am I at once bound to listen to that authority? Am I sure that the Voice of God Himself reaches me through it?

These are great questions, my brethren, and doubtless it would be most interesting to find the answer

to some of them. Certainly some of them demand an answer. But behind them all there is lurking a really deeper question, and it is this : How shall we make life happy ? Tell us where we shall find real happiness. Sorrows, difficulties, perplexities, temptations, miseries press upon us on every side. Is there no way in which the heart can find rest and peace for itself ?

This I believe to be the real question of the day. This lies beyond all efforts to mend the evils of our time. This is what the mind is craving after when it imagines that the settling of some doubt, or the solving of some problem would satisfy it. This is the question that is being asked by all the anxious care-worn faces, the eager, unsettled looks of the crowds that we meet in the streets of this great town, and which touch and move one's heart so profoundly. Ah, there is no sadder book to read than the history of man's life written broadly on all those faces which seem to be yearning after something which they cannot reach. And tell me, then, you who live amongst this crowd of men, what are all the masses of them seeking after ? Money, perhaps ; or power ; or success of some kind in the world ; or fame ; or honour ; or comfort and bodily enjoyment ; luxury ; or pomp, or influence over others. It may be so, but behind these again there is something for which all these things are all being sought. Each man in all the crowd is only

longing, labouring, hunting after those things because he believes that they will make him happy. It is on reaching and finding true happiness that he is bent. Even a heathen philosopher could tell us that that was the end of life.

Nay, dear brethren, we need not look beyond these holy walls to find out that this is the one object after which we are straining. Why are you here now? What do you come here to inquire after? What is it you would learn from us? There is something you have not found. What is it? There is something which you hope yet to reach. For something you have prayed. If there were no longing in your souls, why should you cry so earnestly to God? Before you too there stretches out the bright hope of happiness.

See, then, here is the great question, How can the soul be happy? Here is the great need of every one of us :—the finding of real, true, unfailing happiness. And, here, out of the mouth of God Himself, Who made us, knows us, feels for us, notices our every longing, and can satisfy it, out of His mind and out of His mouth comes the answer to the question in these words: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Happiness lies in these two things, in knowing, and in doing. Rather perhaps knowledge opens the way to true happiness. True happiness itself is only to be

found in real, hearty, loving obedience to God. This is the Revelation that comes out of the Heart of God the Son to us. This is his answer to the longing, yearning, craving heart of man. The whole human race, in the midst of its sorrows and perplexities, its ignorance and darkness, its wanderings and blindness, its disappointments and failures, cries out to Him, "Oh, show us what will make life really happy. Tell us what will lift us above these griefs and trials. Tell us what will satisfy our souls"; and our Lord answers, "Learn to know the truth, and act upon it."

3. But see further what fresh force and meaning these words gather from the time at which they were spoken. It was on the night before He died on the Cross that our Lord said these words. They were spoken at the close of His long, patient, loving, gentle, forbearing teaching of His Apostles. For three years He had been training them, and leading them on to perceive the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. He had borne with their dulness and slowness of heart. He had been seeking to lift them above the world. He had shown them that the world was not worth following after by refusing for Himself its honours, its praise, its comforts. He had opened their eyes to the great secrets of God and of their own nature. He had shown them what God is in Himself, what He is to man. He had spoken to them of His own coming

from the Father to give them life. He had foretold His sufferings, His Cross, and Passion. He had manifested to them His mercy and His Power, in words and parables of love, in miracles of tenderness and compassion. He had lived before their eyes a life of spotless, winning, perfect holiness. His every word and act had borne witness to the deep, true blessedness of a life thoroughly devoted to God. All this for three years He had been leading them on to know. Nay, more, much of this He had only a few minutes before set touchingly before them in a parable of action. He had laid aside His garments, and taken a towel, and girded Himself, and washed His disciples' feet, and wiped them with the towel wherewith He was girded. In this very act He had expressed before their eyes the deepest mysteries of His Incarnation, how He had laid aside His heavenly glory, and united our poor Human Nature to Himself, and how through that pure Human Nature of His each one of us was to be washed and cleansed. And then, from these high mysteries of the washing which alone could give them a part in Him, He calls down their thoughts to the simple following of His example. If they have understood the wonders of that Incarnation and its cleansing power, He tells them to do to one another in lowly acts of kindness after their measure what He had done in stooping from heaven

to earth for their sakes. And in this He promises that they will find their happiness ; “ If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

II. There are two lessons which follow from what has been said.

1. The first is the importance of knowing the Truth. Alas, it is too common to hear people say in our days, “ So long as a man leads a good life it does not matter what he believes.” We should meet this at once by asking, Can a man lead a good life—can his heart be really right with God—if he consciously refuses to believe what God has told us? Can he love God if he does not wish to learn all that he can about Him? Can he trust God if he thinks that God could deceive him? Can he be humble towards God, can he feel his own weakness and nothingness, and the majesty and greatness of God, if he is too proud to receive from the mouth of God what seems too hard to him? It is clear that if a man knows that a truth comes from God, and sets his mind against it, he is as much disobeying God as if he broke one of God’s commandments. It is equally clear that, if a man will not take the trouble to find out what God has taught to the world, he is despising God. God does not speak to the world for nothing. What He tells us, He tells us in love and mercy, because it is for our good to know it. We must be

the worse, therefore, for not knowing any one of the truths that He has revealed. Why did our Blessed Lord make known all the body of truth that He taught in the world? Why did He deliver it to His Apostles? Why did He promise that the Spirit should lead them into all truth? Why did He charge them to teach to others exactly what He had taught to them? Why does He describe it as part of the world's sin that the faith will not be found on the earth at His coming? This can only be because it is for our happiness to know what He taught, and because it is a sin against His Love to be careless about holding fast what He has been pleased to reveal. And so here is the first point for us to aim at, if we would enjoy real happiness: we must set ourselves to learn in all its fulness the whole body of Divine Truth, we must find out what is the Revelation that God has made—what He has told us about Himself, and ourselves. And so St. Augustine says, "No riches, no treasures, no honours, no possessions in this world are worth so much as the Catholic Faith." Again and again in His Word God presses this upon us. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost, Which dwelleth in us." This one sentence alone speaks of the blessing

of having the true faith, the duty of keeping it pure as we received it, and the help which the Holy Spirit gives to those who try to hold it fast.

And here, my brethren, I feel almost appalled as I speak to you. This place, this church, this service, this congregation fill me with fear. They have checked and restrained my words. Do you know why? They seem to me so to witness of the presence of God. They make me feel indeed that God has been working, speaking, revealing Himself amongst you. He, Who for those three patient years, lived and spoke amongst the apostles, has no less lived and spoken here. He, Who opened out the meaning of the truths of heaven by degrees to His dull disciples, has been opening out those same truths to you. He has led you on to see more and more the fulness and depth of all those truths that He has made known to His Church. Even in other matters it may be that He has dealt with you as He dealt with His first followers. As He repressed, and softened, and directed the over-eagerness of the burning heart of St. John, which was once so impatient of all that stood in the way of the Truth, so He may have taught you, even under trial and opposition, to learn what spirit you are of. As He raised the hearts of the whole band of the apostles above the world, as He made them not look for outward and visible triumphs of His kingdom in this

world, but watch rather for signs of His power as the King of all the spirits of men, to mould those spirits by His grace, so He may have taught you to look for the glory of His Church, not in any outward signs of increased power before men, but in the inward spiritual change that is passing over her. But, whatever has been the manner of His teaching, the signs of that teaching are so plain, that they make one feel how awfully close is His presence here. What has He not done amongst, and sought to do in you? What a contrast is this noble church to the small and obscure chapel which stood here before it! What a service is that in which we are taking part this morning! How do both these witness to a restoration of the true faith, for men build noble shrines when they believe in a mighty and blessed Presence to take possession of them; and they make their acts of worship instinct with reverence when they are adoring One Whom they feel to be in the midst of them, demanding all that they can offer. Yet it is not in these that one sees so plainly the work of our Blessed Lord amongst you as in the opening out of the truth which He taught into an ever-growing freshness. Ah, brethren, what words have you heard here for three years past at these same services! How has the purity of our Blessed Lord's example; the winning holiness of His life; the power of His indwelling; the love shown to you

in His Passion ; the blessedness of self-sacrifice, in and through Him, the peace and rest in God, that the soul may find through Him ; how have all these things been spoken of to you ! With what moving and persuasive eloquence ! How have you been blessed in knowing all these things ! What reason have you had to find out for yourselves what real happiness it gives to the soul to know its God ; the love, the tenderness, the compassion, the grace, the salvation of God.

2. And, if this be so, is not one other lesson plain ? Knowledge is nothing without obedience. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." What is all knowledge of God, of His nature, of His love, of His Person, of His acts, of His grace, if it does not lead on to obeying Him ? What but a condemnation of those who know so much and do so little ? Ah, could I press upon you a more real, true, useful work for this Lent than that you should see how your life is answering to all that our Lord has taught you ! All this high teaching, which has almost set Him before you in His life and in His death, with all the constraining influence which that sight ought to have upon your souls,—what change has it brought about in your lives, your characters, your aims, your efforts, your thoughts, your wishes, your acts, your words ?

Take these words of our Blessed Lord's, and make them the subject of meditation and self-examination. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

(a.) On your knees speak, as it were, thus to Him : "Thou tellest me, O Lord, what is the secret of real happiness. Thou, Who didst make this soul, and Who knowest what it needs, dost point out to me the way to the true enjoyment of life. Help me to listen, and to learn of Thee !"

(b.) Then thank our Blessed Lord for having brought the Truth into this blind, ignorant world. Thank Him for having brought you within the circle of that divine light, and made its beams to play upon your soul. Count up the number of truths of which He has given you clear and certain knowledge through the teaching of His Church, which is the pillar and ground of the truth. Recognise the richness and fulness of the inheritance of mysteries that have come to your soul from God. Say to yourself, "I know what God is in Himself, the wonderful Unity of the Three Blessed Persons in one Godhead ; I know what God is to me, His reconciliation to me through His Son, His tender fatherly love, His readiness to aid and guide me, His will to make me His Own for ever. I know the love of my Lord in being made man for me,—and the cleansing power of His death

on the Cross to take away my sin,—and the store of grace that is laid up in Him for me,—and the coming forth of His life into me through His Sacraments,—and the power of that life to quicken me, to change and work upon my fallen nature, until I grow into a likeness of Him Who Himself lives, and dwells, and grows up within me.” Then, again, thank our Lord, Who has made you know these things. Yet, once more, turn to the thought of the perception of these truths that has come upon your mind as you have read of them in Holy Scripture,—or especially as you have heard of them in these Lenten services. Acknowledge this too as the gift of our Lord, the undeserved gift of His love to you. Then turn to your Lord in thought again, but this time not only to adore Him, but to judge yourself before Him for the use you have made of His teaching. “So far Thou hast led me, how have I answered to Thy guidance? All these wonders of heavenly Truth Thou hast shown me. Not one of them could I have reached for myself. Thou hast taught me them to make my heart happy. How have I used them? Can I say before Thee that I am happy, at peace, calm, rejoicing in the light of truth that Thou has shed around me? If not, why not? What is amiss? What makes me still uneasy? How have I come short of the blessing to which Thou hast been leading me

on? What is wrong in my soul, my life, at this moment?"

Then take the words of our Lord as if they were spoken directly to yourself, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them,"—and see if you do not find in them the reason for all the sadness, and gloom, and despondency, and perplexity, and dissatisfaction that is robbing you of true happiness. Ah, perhaps you have never even tried to live up to these high truths that have been brought before you! When our Lord, Who revealed them, was looking to see how they would affect you, you have disappointed His watching eye. You could listen to His words; but, when the time came for the memory of those words to tell upon you in the lowly, common acts of daily life, you turned aside from the demand that they made upon you. When in the intercourse with others He was looking for denial, and forgetfulness of self, for offices of humble kindness, for all that could soothe, or comfort, or help others, for lowly ministering in gentleness and sympathy with the wants, or the sorrows, or the difficulties of those about you, for the washing of the feet,—you did not care to do what He was asking of you. You were ready enough for listening in rapture to the wonders that fell from Him, but you had no heart for doing for His sake what it would have been a joy to Him to see you do. This is why at the

present moment you are unhappy. See whether this be not so.

You find yourself dull and lifeless in the things that have to do with God. You are heavy and listless in His worship. There is neither point, nor fervour, nor earnestness in your prayers. You read, and no light comes into your mind. You hear of God and no love is kindled in you. You sing His praises with your voice, but there is no warmth in your heart to give fire to those praises. The incense will not burn.

Why is this? Is it not because you have heard all the moving truths of our faith so long without acting upon them, that now they do not affect you at all? You have got used to them as a man gets used to some oft-repeated strain of music, so that he hardly notices that it is sounding in his ears.

You are perplexed and puzzled about the articles of your faith. You have no grasp of truth. You are uncertain what to believe. You cannot make out what comes to you with a revelation from God.

Again, why is this? Is it not because you have heard great truths spoken of, and have played with them, argued about them, but never made them your own by acting on them as principles of your spiritual life? They have moved around you, and fallen on you, as the sunbeams may play, and fall, and pass over a stone statue. They have not passed into your being,

and warmed your inner life, as the sun gives heat to the living body and cherishes its powers.

Or, once more, you are dissatisfied. There is an aching void in your spirit, a sense of craving want,—or a feverish, excited looking out for something to satisfy you. Again, why is this? Is it not because you have been spending your energies on merely knowing,—“ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth,”—as if God could be loved with the mind, without being loved with the heart. You have been eager to hear the last noted preacher, as eager to criticise what he said, to note his voice, tone, manner, the cleverness and originality of his thoughts. Your ears have been open to catch the religious gossip of your circle. You have bought, as with a hungry longing, the last new Devotional Book, and seized with avidity on its most striking novelties. You have turned almost with a weary disgust from the calm, regular order of settled worship in the same Church to novel and exciting forms of ritual. And not one of all these things has satisfied you. Not one has reached the heart and life. Not one has done more than pass over the mind, or play upon the imagination and fancy. You are at this moment dull, perplexed, dissatisfied as ever. You are longing, thirsting, gasping after happiness,—aye, even while you do not know it.

Meanwhile one loving heart is yearning to com-

fort you. One true wise voice speaks to you. One eye that can read your distress sees your great mistake. One tender warning fills your ear to-day. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Try a life of simple obedience to God in all the duties of life. There is an outer sphere of faith, and knowledge, and emotion, and feeling; but true, full happiness is not to be found there. It lies in the innermost circle of the regenerate heart, where love to God is seated on a throne and rules each thought, and word, and act, bringing each and all into obedience to God. To know God is blessed, most blessed, more than we could ask, and it must be the first step to happiness; but to love Him, to obey Him is far, far better. To do His will in perfection is heaven itself. Aim, then, at this. Do not let yourself fancy that to be without temptation and difficulties is the only way to happiness. It may even be your greatest blessing for a while to be subject to temptation. God's own Son was tempted in all points like as we are, and in His firm resistance to temptation His fidelity to the will of His Father was manifested. And of us too it is written, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to those that love Him." In faithful struggle against each sin in you that grieves God, in denial of yourselves and placing Him before yourselves, in sacrificing self to carry out God's

will or to serve those around you,—in ready submission to what the unerring wisdom of God points out for you to do or to bear, in daily acts of duty done simply for God, whether you be wife, or sister, or mother, or child, or husband, or father,—in living in a personal relation to God, doing for Him and in His Name whatever in the business of life has to be done,—in one and all these make it your aim to act upon the knowledge that He has given you of Himself. Then be sure happiness will come, will visit your soul, and grow within it. Each act you do for Him will bind you faster to God. Each thing you give up for His sake will make you know Him more. Every earnest effort to please Him will fill you with a consciousness of His unswerving love. You will live and move, as it were, in the sunshine of the smile of God. Dulness, perplexity, and doubt, and dissatisfaction will pass away. The reality of life will open upon you as you acknowledge its true end and purpose. The great question of life will be answered, and your heart will be ready to exclaim to your Lord “Yes Thou hast shown me where to find in truth what I was blindly feeling after : to know is blessed ; but, ah ! to do, to be allowed to do what a poor creature can do for Thee, and to have its poor acts accepted in Thy sight, this is happiness indeed. Make it but lasting, persevering, eternal, and I can ask no more.”

V.

THE FORFEITURE OF NEGLECTED BLESSINGS.

Preached at All Saints, Margaret Street, April 4, 1867.

St. Luke viii. 18.

“Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.”

HOW strange a sight is this church and congregation ! It is a sight to make a man wonder, and rejoice, and adore God. You do not think it strange, of course. You are used to the sight of all that surrounds you here. You even wonder perhaps that it can seem strange to me. But it does seem strange to me, when I come, as it were, suddenly on the sight of what you are enjoying. It strikes me as some beautiful view strikes a traveller who has been walking through a narrow defile, and then comes to an unexpected opening from which the prospect breaks upon him

Turn where I will, there are sights here which speak of the goodness and love of God to you. This very building itself, so noble, so beautiful, so religious in its effect, shows that God must have touched some hearts and made them delight in spending their best upon God. It is a witness to us of the greatness and majesty of God for Whom it was built. And all the several parts of the building tell the same story of the love of God. The windows speak of the triumphs of the grace of God in His saints. They set before us the love of God Incarnate. They show us God entering into human relationships, and loving with a love new to Him, the love with which a son loves a mother. They show us God suffering as man, and, out of very love, making Himself acquainted with man's sorrows, man's agonies, and man's death. They show us God as man, throned in glory for man's sake. So strangely full of lessons of the love of God is the place. Not less strangely sweet to me are the sacred services which are carried on here, the calm, quiet daily morning and evening offices, sung in the Church's old song which St. Augustine found to be only too sweet to him, so that he feared lest it should be a snare to him, and make him forget God in the very act of seeming to praise Him. And, most of all, how strange in its power to comfort, to cleanse, to strengthen, to lift above the temptations of the world,

to bind—yes, to unite to God, is that all-prevailing sacrifice of the CROSS which is daily pleaded here ! You who enjoy all this day by day can little imagine how it moves one who has only a passing sight of it, and makes him cry out : “ Oh ! how amiable are Thy dwellings, Thou Lord of Hosts ; ” surely “ God is well known in these palaces as a sure Refuge.”

Yes, yes ; and not to men only is this place full of joy. “ Surely all this is fair to Thee, O my God. Here Thine eye rests on the gifts of Thy children which they have brought to deck Thy chamber, and every gift, however small, is a token of a child’s love. Here Thine ear drinks in the praise of those who feel Thy goodness. Here on bended knees the vows are made by which men bind themselves to Thee, who art worth more than all the world to us. Here the priceless offering of Thy dear Son’s entire Sacrifice of Himself is laid before Thee, and with it are offered the hearts of those who are ready to sacrifice themselves to Thee in and through Him.” Surely God must delight in this.

This is what I have thought and felt from time to time as I came in here.

But, then, a second thought has come into my mind, “ What if all that looks so fair be no more than outward show ? ” The Psalm sounds sweetly ; what if the hearts of those who sing it be out of tune with

the law and will of God? The saints look down upon us from the windows; what if we neglect to copy their lives and ways? What if their example produces no effect on our hearts, just as the hues from their painted figures, when the sun shines through them, pass over the surface of the stone, but leave no mark behind? What if the Sacrifice of our Blessed Lord be shown forth at the Altar, but the worshippers never act in union with that sacrifice, and refuse to offer themselves to God? What if our Blessed Lord be ready to feed men here with Himself, but no one come to Him for life?

And then, I said: "No, this cannot be. It would be too sad." But then the thought came back: "Yet it might be so. It might be so for some one here at least. Go, and speak to that one, and warn and plead. Show him the danger of neglecting so great salvation." This, then, is what I wish to press upon you to-day. There is a very great, a very real danger in living in the enjoyment of such high blessings as you have here. There is such a thing as not using those blessings. There is such a thing as losing them. See how plainly our blessed Lord warns us of this in the text: "He that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." There is a sin mentioned here, and its punishment.

I. What is the sin? It is the sin of not using

the blessings which we have from God. It is clear that it is against this sin that our Blessed Lord warns us, for in the nineteenth chapter of St. Luke the same warning is given at the end of the Parable of the Talents. The servant that had made no use of his lord's money, and gained nothing by trading with it, was stripped of all that he had. And our Lord explains the sentence that was passed on the man by saying—"From him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him." Again, the same warning is given in the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew. And there the words are specially applied to the case of those who have the truth set before them, and turn away from it. From them the truth is veiled, and hidden. They will not believe, and therefore they cannot believe. The power to believe goes from them. The disciples asked our Lord why he spoke to the people in parables ; why He did not plainly, openly tell out the full truth to them. And His answer was that God gave the power to know, to see, and believe the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven to the disciples. He did not give that power to the rest. The disciples were ready to make use of what they heard, and therefore the truths of the Church were laid open to them. The knowledge of those truths grew more and more upon them. The others would not avail themselves of what the Son of God was teaching, and

therefore they knew less and less of the Truth. "For," our Lord says, "whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I unto them in parables; because they, seeing, see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the Prophecy of Esaias, which saith, "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

Oh, strange, sad power, which is in man! That God should speak, and we should be able to refuse to hear! That God should open His mind to us, and we should be able to shut out from our minds what He is ready to teach us! That the light of heaven should shine all round about us, and that we should be able to keep our own self-chosen darkness in the midst of its shining, and to be black and lustreless instead of reflecting the brilliancy of heaven! "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness

rather than light, because their deeds were evil." That God should give, and we should be able to refuse ! That He should press His mercies, and offer His blessings, and shower His bounties around us, and that we should be able to say, "I will have none of Thy gifts !" That the dews of His love should fall all around us, and that we should be able to remain dry as Gideon's fleece ! That we should "have His riches, and yet not have them" ! That God should open out all the treasure-house of His grace to us, and yet that we should be poor and destitute in the midst of the abundance which He pours out upon us !

This is the mystery of our probation. We have that strange power of will by which the creature is able to answer to the love of the Creator. And so it may be our highest happiness to be drawn to God by every act of His goodness to us. We may have His every gift so as to be bound more and more to Him. Alas ! we may so refuse use to His use gifts, that one by one they shall be taken from us.

Ah, my brethen, keep this thought before you, and then remember how many gifts and graces you have received from God. It will make you count them up with awe.

1. "He that hath ;" in one sense, so far as the act of God's goodness goes, what is there which we have not ?

We have been washed from sin: in Jesus Christ we "have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of our sins."

God has taken us to be His children. He has bound Himself by the tenderest of ties to us as a Father: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

We have the power to please Him, as children should long to do; for, though they that are "in the flesh cannot please God, we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit."

We have the Spirit of God to guide us. It is the very proof that God gives us that we are His children that He has sent forth His Son into our hearts. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

We know the truth: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things."

We know more, we know Him from Whom the truth came. We have learned Christ. We know what He is to us, what He has done for us, what He is in Himself, what we must be if we would follow Him.

More even than this, we have been made one with Christ. We are "members of His body," made out "of His flesh and of His bones." His very life works in us to make us like Himself.

All this we "have" from God. These high blessings with all that belongs to them, and flows out from them, all has been given to us. In one sense we "have" all these.

2. How is it, then, with us? Have we all these great gifts in the fuller sense? If forgiveness of sin is pledged to us, do we hate sin, and shrink from its pollution, and turn from it, lest we should grieve God? If we are the children of God, what do we know of the childlike spirit, that is eager to do all that may give joy to a father? If we have the power to please God, what experience have we of that power? What do we know of the sense of that power working in us in efforts to obey God, in willingness to suffer for His sake, which St. Paul had when he said, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me?" If the Spirit of God is ever with us to lead us, do we wait upon Him, quick, anxious, and ready to see the way which He points out, and to choose it? If we know the Truth, do we carry out what we believe into act? If we have learnt what our blessed Lord was in life, in character, in suffering, are we following Him? If He is ready to make His life work within us, are we, by the power of that life, growing into His likeness?

These are fit thoughts for those so highly blessed. See what calls the gifts of God make upon us. They

were not meant to be wasted. Nay, we could not waste them, if we felt the full, free, rich, tender love of Him Who has given us such blessings. And so perhaps it may move us if we consider what God has done for us. It may break our hearts into a truer contrition than we have ever known yet if we try to count over, what really are countless, the acts of God's goodness to us, if we set ourselves to see what He has been to us, and what we have been to Him. In this way every blessing we have from God, from our birth to our death, from our Baptism to the last Sacrament which we receive, may be used as a means of self-examination. Baptism itself, justification, the cleansing of the soul, peace with God, His love for us, His readiness to help us, His allowing us to pray, His speaking to us in our hearts or by His word, His teaching us by the unerring voice of His Church, the light which He gives us to know Himself, or to know ourselves, the power of the Cross of Christ to take away sin, the power of the grace of Christ to change the heart and life, the work which the Holy Spirit did upon us at our Confirmation, the work which our Blessed Lord does upon us in every absolution which He speaks to us through the Priest, in every receiving of Himself in the blessed Sacrament, we may search ourselves about each and all of these, and see how far in any real sense we have used, and enjoyed, and

profited by, and gained from these gifts which He has offered to us. Few forms of self-examination would more humble us ; few would pierce us with a keener sorrow ; few would more awaken in us that mourning love for going against the goodness of God, which is the mark of true repentance.

II. But it is not for this that I press you now to remember what gifts you have had from God, and what use you have made of them. No, I press this on you, that you may see the danger of not using them. See what the danger is,—the gifts shall be taken away. “Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.” Oh, brethren, brethren, is it not almost agony even to think of such a loss as this, here in this Church ? To lose all that is within your reach here, what a woe ! Instead of meeting as the members of the Church of Christ, to be cut off from Him for evermore. Instead of being gathered as children into your heavenly Father’s house, to be cast out as rebels from His Family. Instead of feeling the comfort of His presence here to bless us, to hate the thought of that presence and long to fly from it. Instead of the sound of praise floating round one, to hear the ringing of the curse and blasphemy against God—aye, and to join in it, to join in it while we hate doing so. Instead of the remembrance of Christ on His Cross inviting

the penitent and giving the hope of pardon, to feel the memory of the love of the Cross, which we have rejected, burning like fire into the brain. Instead of the light of Truth shining into our minds, and alluring us nearer and nearer to God, to have the gloom of an unbroken darkness settle down for ever on the soul. Instead of calm, soothing Communion with God, binding us more and more to Him, and making Him more and more all in all to us, to have the sound of that last sentence, "Depart from Me," ever echoing through the soul, and to know that we are cut off for ever from Him Who can alone give peace, rest, joy, and life to us. This is the completion of the misery of which our Lord warns us when He says, "He that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have." Oh ! cast a glance round this church, think of all that is offered to us here, imagine the laying bare to our eye for only one second of the comforts, the peace, the joy, the calm, the bliss of union with God that have been within the reach of those who have come face to face with God here, and then imagine the loss of all this, and the leaving the soul to its own desolation and misery without hope, without relief, without remedy, without God. It is enough to break the heart to think of such a contrast.

But, dear brethren, the beginning of that woe is to be seen in this world. Men begin to know even

here the misery of having wasted gifts withdrawn. Does no one here know that? Look especially at the power to believe in the realities of the kingdom of grace. It is sadly, miserably true that the Faith loses its power over the heart that merely plays with it. There may be some here whose own experience makes them countersign what I say. They know to their own unhappiness that I speak the truth. They are ready to cry out in misery, "I cannot, I cannot believe. Would to God the days of my childhood or of my youth could come back! I seemed then to live in the Presence of God, I could almost see and feel Him near me. I heard His voice speaking to me in every sermon. The priest was indeed the messenger of the Lord of Hosts to me. I hung upon his lips for guidance, and God guided me by him. Then I found my Lord in every communion. He melted my heart with the memories of His own loving sorrows for me. He made me ready to suffer with Him, and for Him. He drew me to Himself. He raised me above myself, I felt His life put forth in me to make me live to God. Because He lived, I lived also. I knew my own closeness to Him. Heaven was opened to me, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on the Son of Man. The Church was indeed to me the kingdom of heaven, full of light and inspiration, and blessing, and protection, and strength, and

manifestations of God. But now all seems to be empty, and bare, and desolate. No voices come to me from God. No preacher ever reaches my heart. The truths of the Catholic faith are dim, shadowy, and uncertain. I am almost ready with Pilate, only more mournfully, to ask, 'What is Truth? Is there any Truth?' All calls to high duties seem strained, extravagant, and fanatical. If it was not for old habit, I could almost ask whether it can be true that our Blessed Lord really ever dwells in those who receive His Body and Blood. I am living like one in a dream. All that I hear and see in religion looks so utterly unreal to me. Sometimes I feel as if it would be a positive relief to throw off even the outward semblance of religion, to have done with the dreary farce of acting the part of a Christian, and to laugh outright at all which once seemed so full of awe and mystery."

Is there any one here across whose mind such thoughts have ever passed? If there be any one who has sunk to a state of spiritual destitution so unutterably sad, how was that state reached?

I. I will not go beyond what you may have seen and heard in this church. Ah, it may be you have knelt before that altar, and high above it you have seen the picture of God in His poverty and humiliation, stripped, bare, and naked, in shame and disgraced,

the very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people. You have gazed in soul on that form, which, marred as it is, in its lifting up has a strange, supernatural beauty that draws all men to it. You have heard of the blessedness of following your Lord in self-denial, and suffering, and humility. But you have indulged self in luxuries ; your table has been loaded with delicacies ; your rooms have been crowded with all that could minister to comfort ; your whole life has been passed in ease and softness ; you have worshipped wealth ; you have schemed for it, you have sinned for it ; you have sought out those who had it as your friends ; you have lived beyond your means to make a show of wealth ; you have simulated by extravagance a wealth which you had not ; you have entailed misery on yourself and others by debts which you cannot pay ; you have defrauded others to increase your own sinful indulgences ; you have deceived others by appearances ; you have striven to hide your own humble origin. Ah, you have grieved Him Who became poor for your sakes ; you have shrunk from suffering ; you have been ashamed of seeming to be as poor as Jesus ; you have minded earthly things, and become an enemy of the Cross of Christ. And now you cannot believe in the blessedness and safety of suffering, and the Cross, and the contempt of the world, and poverty borne for

your Lord's sake, or wealth poured at His feet. Do you wonder? Do you murmur? Do you complain? "He that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." You had the knowledge of His poverty and shame. You felt what it called you to. You acted against this knowledge. You cannot now even believe that to take up the Cross and follow Him is blessed.

Or, again, you have seen here before your eyes God in His sufferings; you have seen Him completing the Sacrifice of His whole life in which He offered Himself to do all, and to bear all, out of love for God and man, by the sacrifice of His death, in which He yielded Himself up to go through every agony that was to come upon Him. Within sight of that Form stretched out there without a murmur and without a struggle, you have heard the high teaching from the pulpit that called upon you to offer yourself up to God to do all and to suffer all for Him with and through your Lord. And then perhaps you have gone and indulged your own will and fancy, and fretted at every restraint that was set on you. You have never tried what it was to sacrifice your money in alms; you have thought how little, not how much you could give,—nor your bodily comforts in fasting—the old-fashioned strictness of the Church,—nor your time in prayer, meditation, and acts of charity.

Is it any wonder if all such teaching seems visionary and unpractical to you, if you are almost ready to feel that nothing but the heated brain of an enthusiast could make S. Paul say, "I am crucified with Christ, yet I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"?

2. But it may be that your case is more unhappy still. You are losing faith in the miracles of grace. You cannot believe in the converting power of the Word of God, because you have learnt too well how to resist it. You have listened to sermons to criticise them, to gain a moment's excitement from them, to comfort yourself by agreeing with them, to make up for a lifelong disobedience to God by a moment's approving of what His servants say. Yes, you have forgotten that the word which God spoke to you by His minister was judging you; "the word which I have spoken unto you, the same shall judge you in the last day." And you have presumed to admire, to patronise, and to judge the minister of God. But you have not heard the Word of God, and kept it. And now it never rouses, moves, warms, or awakens you. "He that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

(a.) Is it not the same with Prayer? Because you have not asked, and not received, you are beginning to doubt whether any do receive; whether there is any mighty power in Prayer.

(b.) It may be even so with absolution. If you have long confessed without contrition ; or even if, when you have been loosed from the chains of sins, you have not used that blessed freedom to make more earnest efforts in the service of God, like the Psalmist, who said, " I will run the way of Thy Commandments when Thou hast set my heart at liberty," it is too likely that your very faith in God's power to loose you is being taken away.

(c.) Worst of all, if you have come to the Blessed Sacrament, and have brought to our Lord a heart that was in alliance with His enemy the world, and if you have so shut Him out from your heart, you may have come to doubt whether there is any such thing as real union with Him.

Alas, then, is not the punishment working? That which you seemed to have is being taken away. By degrees all faith, all trust is dying out of you. There seems to be no strength, no power, no person, apart from yourself, on whom you may lean. The image of God is fading away from before your eyes, out of His Church, and, as the mists thicken round you, you are bewildered, lost, confused, helpless, and hopeless, and you are ready to close your eyes, and refuse to think lest you should see the horror of the gulf into which you are sinking.

III. And now, in the name of God, what is to save

any who are taking the first step towards the abyss, before the horror of that great darkness falls upon them?

1. Think what neglect of high privileges brings men to. See this pictured to us in the end of Jerusalem. We cannot dwell now on the sorrows of that city so long loved, so richly blessed by God, but given over at last to the fury of its enemies. The sorrows were so great that our Lord wept at the thought of all that the city had lost, and of all that was coming upon it. And the sufferings of Jerusalem are a parable of the sufferings of a lost soul, torn by evil passions raging within it, beset, surrounded, overcome by its enemies, helpless, and defenceless against this malice, deserted and bereft of the Presence of God. And as our Lord weeps out over Jerusalem the sad lament, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes," we see the meaning of His words, "He that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

2. Ah, but we see more. We see our hope. We see that the hope of those who have been wasting the gifts of God, but who would do so no more, lies in the tender, mourning, patient love of the Son of God, and in the yearning of His heart over us. What a

sorrow must that have been over Jerusalem which almost broke the heart of the Son of God ; which broke up the fountains of the great deep of His compassion, and made the tears, which never fell for His own bitter sufferings, fall so fast for the woes of others !—a new flood to wash the world ! And what a love must have been the moving cause of that sorrow ! a love which had borne with scorn, and ingratitude, and hardness, and contempt, and rejection of His offers ! In that love lies our hope. To that love let us appeal for pardon for every wasted opportunity, for every formal prayer, and every unworthy Communion, for every neglected warning, for the graces we have spurned, for the graces we have not used, for a life of profession which has been a lie before Him, and a seeming service which has been well-nigh as bad as the kiss of Judas. If even now we feel shame, fear, sorrow at having been so hard to Him Who has been so good to us, that sorrow is a gift which comes from His love. And there is a strange power of reversing our ruin of ourselves in His love. Hear His own words : “ I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.” Not until we refuse this warning will He remove “ the candle-stick out of its place.”

“ Be watchful and strengthen the things which

remain, that are ready to die ; remember how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent." Before His gifts are lost for ever, He stirs us thus to use them.

Even with the lukewarm, who are on the edge of that terrible rejection, "I will spue thee out of My mouth," He says "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve that thou mayest see." Here is the promise of a new forgiveness, a new light, and a new love. There is a higher promise still, in which He offers the most that we can ask, His Own close Presence, even in the soul which once had ceased to care for him ; "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten ; be zealous, therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Ah, then, even to us the restoration of all that has seemed lost, or almost lost, is possible ; not only the graces which we have forfeited, but Himself, the Giver, and Source, and Fountain of all graces, the Life and Joy of the soul.

VI.

UNION A SUPERNATURAL GIFT.

Preached at St. Michael's, Brighton, November 6, 1866.

I Corinthians x. 17.

“We being many are one bread, and one body : for we are all partakers of that one Bread.”

WE are met together this morning, my brethren, to thank God for making us able to do some work for Him in His Church during the past year. We are met to ask His pardon for the many faults which we have committed in that work, for thoughts, and words, and acts which so marred that work. We are met to offer ourselves afresh to God to work more truly and earnestly for Him in the coming year. We come before Him to ask for wisdom, and guidance, and strength to do whatever we may be called to do ; and to get, if it may be, a clearer view of the principles

on which all work in the Church of God ought to be done. This is, I suppose, the object of a yearly commemoration of a Church Union. And there is a strange mixture of sadness and joy in such a meeting as this of ours to-day. There must be very deep sadness in the heart of any of us who loves our Blessed Lord, as we think what the Church looks like to Him. Alas! What carelessness, and coldness, what unholiness and sin does He see in the members of His Church! What errors, and false doctrines, and delusions, and darkness have clouded over the souls of those whom He longs to enlighten with the light of His truth! What misunderstandings, and divisions, and contentions have separated those whom He desires to bind fast together in the bonds of love! What wilfulness and disorder does His eye mark in the ranks of those who ought to find their happiness in bringing every thought into obedience to Christ, and in living in a glad submission to the loving rule of the Kingdom of Heaven! This must be a grief to our Blessed Lord. It must be a grief to any one of us who ever stops to think what the Church was meant to be, and what it is. The very name your body bears has in it the mark of failure and sin. For why should there be a Church Union at all as distinguished from the whole body of the Church? There was indeed a Church Union in the days of the

apostles, but it was the union of the whole Church, banded together in one faith, in one love, in one single devotion to God. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Why is there need of any narrower Church Union now? It is only because to so many the faith, and peace, and order, and well-being of the Church are not dear as they should be. And this must throw a shade of sadness over our hearts to-day.

And yet some joy at least will mingle with that sadness, for it is some cause of joy that any one of you should have been drawn to our Blessed Lord, and should be ready to work for Him. It is some cause of joy that you so love and prize the truth which our Blessed Lord taught to the world that you are ready to defend, and preserve it for the good of others. No one can wonder that you should be ready to do so. If you have found that there is strength, and support, and guidance, and happiness for the soul in each part of the Catholic Faith, then you could not help doing your utmost to keep that Faith so pure that others may receive it in all its fulness and richness. If you have found for yourselves peace with God, and forgiveness, and grace, and blessing in the

Sacraments of the Church, then you must long that others should share in those blessings. No one can wonder at this. But it must be a happiness to any one to notice year by year the increasing number of those who are ready to work for the Church, because they have found for themselves the truth of Christ and the grace of Christ in the Church, and because they would wish all others to be blessed as they have been blessed.

And now, dear brethren, let us consider how this work which you have at heart is to be done. How is the Faith of the Church to be defended and spread? How are the Order and Discipline of the Church to be restored? You will tell me at once that this must be done through union. "It is the meaning," you will say, "of the very title which we bear. We have bound ourselves together in a Church union, because we are convinced that a firm, united band can do more to carry a great object to a successful issue than ever so many individuals acting separately. Union is strength." Undoubtedly union is strength. It is one of the commonest and truest maxims of worldly wisdom. Would to God the children of light were wise enough in their generation to see and act upon the wisdom of the maxim! If any work is to be done in the Church, we must have union of heart, and will, and mind, and purpose, and action. And such true

union will win its way. The true union of those first believers, who were of one heart, and of one soul, did win its way. The world was astonished, overawed, attracted, subdued, hushed, and conquered by such a union. But why? That unearthly union—in which all souls became one—in which lower interests were merged in an interest transcendently higher—in which all hearts beat together with one pulse of love, and were thrilling with one common hope, in which all affections were centered in One Person—whence did it come? What did it speak of? That Union came from heaven. It spoke of heaven. It was brought out in the Church by the influence of the King of Heaven, moulding all wills to His Own blessed Will. That union spoke of a mind, a spirit, a presence above the nature of man directing all the purposes of man into one channel. Have we got such a union, in which selfishness, and lower aims, and the love of our own opinion, and the enjoyment of an intellectual triumph, and the fondness for some petty scheme, or the determination to carry out some favourite notion are cast out and overcome by one absorbing, purifying, ennobling interest, which takes possession of all souls, as if there were but one soul in the multitude of the believers?

Answer, answer, hearts and consciences, as ye remember the words that have been spoken, and the

things that have been done, professedly in the Name of God !

Would we have such a union? Oh, does it not seem a fair thing to us, with the warmth and closeness of its affection—with the fulness of mutual comfort and support in our holy work, and the countenance of God beaming upon it, and the spirit of love working even more fully in its congenial atmosphere? As we turn from the thought of the bickerings, and the suspicions, and the unkindnesses of those who are not at one, to the thought of this oneness of heart, do we not almost cry out in pain at the contrast—“Behold how good and joyful a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity?”

And can we have such union amongst ourselves? Undoubtedly we can. But how shall we get it? Is it to be got by taking counsel with one another, or by laying down fixed rules of action, and agreeing to follow them? These things are useful, but they will not give union. There is something which must come before all these. Union is a supernatural gift. That which separates man; that which makes one will jar against another is the selfishness of our sinful nature. And the blessed change which can alone bring all hearts into a true union is a change worked within us by a higher nature acting on our nature. We may agree to work for one end; we

may bind ourselves by rules in our efforts to attain that end ; but this is only an outward plan of agreement. True, lasting, real, firm union must spring from an inward principle stirring in all souls in common. And is this within our reach ? It is indeed. It is one of the miracles of our Blessed Lord's love and grace to work such a union within and amongst us. We are ready now to understand the secret of true union which is given us in the text. I have been leading you to see clearly the difficulties that stand in the way of union, that you may mount above the world, and carry up your thoughts to the throne and seat of union in the bosom and mind of our Blessed Lord. "We being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that One Bread." The beginning of union is to be found in the life of Christ imparted to the soul, when "by One Spirit we are all baptised into One Body." The maintaining of union is to be accomplished by the feeding in the holy Eucharist on Him who is the One Bread. As our Blessed Lord gives Himself to the soul, the soul feeds on Him and lives by Him. The life, the power, the strength of Christ passes into the soul, and so the character of Christ is formed in the soul. Old things pass away, behold all things become new. The soul begins to love with the love which Christ awakens within it ; to long for what Christ longs for ; to yield

itself up to work for, and to be worked on by Christ. And this takes place in all the multitude of souls that are dwelt in by our Blessed Lord. One life, one converting power, one renewing grace works in all. Nay, let us claim the fulness of truth in all its astonishing blessedness ; not strength only, not any mere gift is bestowed upon us, not any mere effluence from our Lord visits our souls, but, what is far more, One living, loving Lord personally works in all who feed on Him, and so binds heart to heart in Himself. Our Blessed Lord is, as it were, the heart and centre of all life, love, purity, and holiness, and we are as the limbs through which the life-blood circulates. The presence of Christ is to the souls in which He dwells what the breath of God was to the limbs of Adam that had been fashioned out of the dust. It fills them with the power of one common life, and stirs them to the common action which springs from the principle of that common inward life. Without this living union with Christ, rules, and plans, and regulations, and designs will never hold hearts together. You might as well take the branches severed from a tree, and bind them together by cords outwardly, and imagine that you could so make them into one living tree, with the unity of a real life within it, as imagine that you could make men really one by the outward bands of rules, and laws restraining them.

You could not so give a real, lasting union. There might be outward conformity, and perhaps even a measure of agreement for a time, in a society of men so bound together ; but sooner or later the separated life which every one would be living in his selfishness would assert itself, and union would be lost. On the other hand, where a living union with Christ exists, it will mould men into a faster union, as they are more possessed with the life that comes from Him and as they grow into the likeness of our Blessed Lord. And so St. Paul says that the whole object of our being brought together in the Church is that we may "grow up into Him in all things, Which is the Head, even Christ : from Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Let us see, then, what this involves.

1. First, of course, it shows us that the receiving of the blessed Sacrament of the holy Eucharist is the chief means for binding us together in a holy, true, and loving union : "We being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that One Bread." But there can be no need for me to press this on you. It is a truth that has become dear to you in many and many an act of communion with your Lord.

2. I will, then, rather ask you next, whether you see all that the receiving of the holy Eucharist, in its turn, involves. If the wonderful blessedness of communion lies in its being the means by which the life of our Lord passes into the soul, then we need to watch very closely how far there is a real communion between our spirit and His Spirit. Do we indeed crave to be one in heart and mind with our Blessed Lord? Are our plans such as He would wish to have carried out? Are the things which we long for such as He longs to give? I hardly know a more useful question for the members of a Church Union to put to themselves than this. We have our schemes and intentions for the coming year. There are objects which we have set before us. Is it the life of Christ stirring within our souls which moves us to attempt these things? Are they in harmony with His will? Are they the objects of His heart? It may help us to answer these questions if we remember that there are certain signs of our being brought into more entire union with our Blessed Lord.

(*a.*) One such sign is a glad and ready submission to our heavenly Father's will. How marvellous is the combined fervour and patience of our Lord! He comes into the world burning to do His Father's work: "Lo! I come to do Thy will, O Lord," is the expression of His Spirit as He enters on His earthly

course. Throughout His whole ministry there is a positive hungering for work: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." And yet He waited till He was thirty years old at Nazareth for the appointed time to begin; and He bore—who can say how meekly—with all that crossed His purposes. See what a pattern we have here for all Church work; what reason to try the singleness of our aims; what need to notice how we bear the contradiction of others; and how far we are able to restrain our eagerness, and to wait God's time for His work to be done; if we would make sure that we are working in union with our Lord.

(*b.*) Mark, again, how our Blessed Lord obeyed the law and ritual of the Jewish Church. See how He submitted Himself to this in His Circumcision, in His Presentation in the Temple, and in the many other acts of worship which He offered as man, and yet remember how He must have seen the imperfections of that system which was meant only for the training of the people of God before the full truth was manifested. And then contrast with this the way in which some fret and chafe at what seem to them imperfections in the law and ritual of the Church now. Remember, while you think of this, how often the fault may lie in those who murmur, in their ignorance, or in their misunderstanding of the

law of the Church, not in any real imperfection in that law. And then see whether those who are impatient with everything that does not fall in with their own, perhaps mistaken, ideal of perfection can be said to be one in spirit with Him Who, in His perfect obedience, said, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

(c.) And so, as rising out of this, what special need we have to guard against the following of self-will and the indulgence of our own fancies! We may well doubt if there is any true communion of our heart with the heart of Him who pleased not Himself, if we are always eager to please the eye, the ear, or even the imagination and the intellect in matters of religion.

(d.) Above all, if we would be one with our Lord, we must in our communion seek to be cleansed from sin. It is sin which darkens the mind, and clouds over the soul. We must crave to be set free from sin in whatever form, whether of unkindliness, or jealousy, or harshness, or vanity, or fierceness of temper, or luxury, or defiling passion. There can be no passing of the life of Christ into our souls if we keep wilfully in our souls what He hates. It is only if we walk in the light as He is in the light that we have fellowship one with another, He with us, and we with Him.

3. And then, further, if we are living in communion with our Blessed Lord ; if our communions are so real that He and we are really brought together in the receiving of the Blessed Sacrament, then we shall catch His temper and disposition. And perhaps there is no kind of work in which that temper and disposition have more opportunity for showing themselves than in the work of a Church Union. What is your aim and object, my brethren ? It is to bring men to receive the Truth, and so to lead them to God. And this is the very object of our Lord Himself, at least in this you are one with Him. But see how He worked for that object : how He yearned over the men that were in error ; how patiently He taught them ; how quick He was to make allowances for them ; how deep was His compassion for their misery ; how gentle He was in His dealings with them. See whether you are one with Him in this meekness and lowliness of heart. Oh, pity, pity the poor world. Do not be impatient, harsh, overbearing towards those who cannot see the truth. Believe that men would be glad to see it. Their spirits are often aching for want of it, even while they know not this want. Deal with the erring as you would deal with a sick man. Pity, not impatience, is the feeling that should move us towards those who have not received the faith. It was pity that drew our Lord to seek and to save that

which was lost. He was moved with compassion because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no Shepherd. If His life be in us, and we are one with Him, pity and tender compassion will be the one constraining feeling of our minds. And then, my brethren, what becomes of bitter condemnation of others, and sharp, clever, biting sayings, and arrogance of mind, and heart, and expression, and intellectual triumphs, and all the uncharitableness that arises out of unchastened controversy? Surely these must pass away where the Spirit of Jesus rules the heart. Surely where they remain there is reason to fear that the bond of Communion with our Lord is very feeble. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Where these tempers are, we may well believe that the life of Christ is working in the soul. But where, instead of these, we find "variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies," perhaps even "hatred," must we not fear that the soul is losing the life of Christ, and that death is beginning to work within it? The life of Christ may indeed yet cast out this death; but unless this be so this death will shut out His life.

4. And this leads us naturally to a further point as regards our dealings with others. If one common life works in the whole Church, then we ought to

cherish in ourselves a strong faith that our Lord works in others as well as in ourselves. And this would make us ready to learn from others. In our Lord "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "In Him" alone "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." How sad is it, then, to hear men speaking with an assumption of perfect wisdom, treating others with superciliousness, and almost lecturing their companions with a tone of superiority, as if they had attained themselves to the whole range of knowledge! They venture to seat themselves aloft as on a tribunal from which to pronounce infallible decrees. Is not this to forget that "unto every one of us is given grace only according to the measure of the gift of Christ"? The One Spirit of our Lord "divideth to every man severally as He will." Others, then, have their gifts and powers from God as well as ourselves. Others have their work to do in the Church as well as we. Rather, He Who is the life of the Church uses others as His limbs, and organs, as well as ourselves. Let us recognise His presence. Often and often some side of the truth, partly hidden or kept in the background by ourselves, would be brought out more fully by the mind of another, if we would be ready to listen to the voice of Christ speaking through another. The mind that is in union with Christ's mind will

recognise His tones often when least expected. Just as in the dim morning light, when our Blessed Lord stood on the shore, the beloved disciple, with the quick eye of a ready affection, recognised Him, and said, "It is the Lord," so the heart that really loves our Lord, whenever any fragment of the truth is put forth by any one, will recognise that truth as coming from our Lord, and will say, "It is the Lord's voice, it is part of His teaching." There is no saying how we might gain in intercourse with others if, instead of being eager to force our own view, instead of being eager to battle down the opinion of another, instead of having the eye keenly set to find out error, we would watch with a loving glance to discern some of the forms of truth; if, instead of "rejoicing in iniquity, we would rejoice in the truth."

You will not misunderstand me, brethren. We know that Catholic Truth is one, clear, distinct, definite. But we know also that from the first it has been given to the great minds of the teachers of the Church to illustrate different sides of the truth. Do we not believe that the same work is done amongst ourselves now? and, if so, ought we not to be ready to learn one from another? If Church Union does not imply this, I do not know what it does imply.

5. But let me pass to one last thought that may well animate and encourage, if it also awes and restrains,

you in your work. If, as we partake of the One Bread, we become one Body ; if the life of our Lord joins us together ; if His character is more and more formed within us, and we are so more entirely one with Him—then what a power is there on our side ! The strength of Christ is on our side. The love of Christ is shedding its influence over the earth through us. It is no more we that work, but Christ Who dwelleth in us. It is the wisdom of God that is to reach the minds of men through us. It is the loving law of God that is to mould the wills of men in His Church through us. This may well make us think and act with care, with watchfulness, with awe ; for what a thing it is to be the instruments of God, to be used by Him for bringing back a world that has fallen into error and misery into the way of truth and peace ! But, full of awe as the thought of our union with God is, it is more full of hope and joy ; for, when God works, the work must prosper. The King of Kings goeth forth conquering and to conquer. Before Him darkness and ignorance, sin and error, confusion and discord, suffering and misery will sooner or later flee away. It may be that the Church, and we with the Church, may yet have to pass through much suffering and trial, yes, even through scorn, and derision, and rejection. So did her Head, our Blessed Lord Himself, in the days of

His flesh. The world that rose up against Him seemed to have its way, and He lay dead in His grave. But He could not be conquered then. He rose to life. And He cannot be conquered now. The hour of His triumph will come. And blessed, thrice blessed they who have lived in union with Him, for, in the hour of His triumph, they too shall triumph over all that now afflicts this poor world.

Be calm, then, my brethren, be patient, be firm, be loving, be true, "be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you." Live in real union of heart and will, of intention and act with our Blessed Lord, let His purpose be your purpose, and that purpose shall prevail at last. "Magna est Veritas et prævalebit." Yea, rather, "Magnus est Ille qui dixit, Ego sum Veritas et Vita, et prævalebit."

VII.

FAITH IN THE SUPERNATURAL.

Preached at St. Michael's, Brighton, 1866. Feast of St. Michael
and All Angels.

St. John i. 50, 51.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these.’ And he saith unto him, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’”

THE use of such days as these, my brethren, is to lift us nearer to God and heaven. All that we see and hear around us this morning ought to do this. If it does not, then the services of this week have lost their point. Just as the great gathering of subjects at the court of the sovereign on some high day helps to bring out the greatness of the sovereign before men's eyes, so, when we see the throngs of worshippers in

this holy place, the court of the King of Kings, it helps to bring home to us something of the greatness of Him before Whom every knee in this great crowd bows down. Just as loyal hearts grow even more loyal, as men find themselves banded together to testify their devotion to the sovereign, and enthusiasm spreads from one to the other, so, as we join together here in one united band to show honour to God, we feel our love and devotion to Him stirred to a greater warmth. Every note of every hymn that swells out from those amongst whom we stand, makes our own souls thrill with more fervent praise; nay, every device which is painted on these walls speaks of a pious love that delights to do something for God, and so reminds us of what we owe to Him. In all these ways a Feast of Dedication kindles the loyalty of our hearts towards God.

But, besides this, such days ought to plant some point of the faith deeper or to bring higher points of the faith before us. Each fresh Feast of Dedication ought to be a step onwards. I do not mean in outward things. It ought to make us know more of God, and resolve to do more for God. Has not the past year been preparing you for this? If not, for what has it been preparing you? Probably at your last Dedication Feast some new side of truth was presented to you by the priest who spoke to you.

Some new light was thrown upon the faith which the Church teaches. Some new demand was made upon your hearts. Some new and higher path of duty was opened out to you. And how was this followed on God's part? By continual gifts of new strength: by constant visits of God to your heart. How many times has He let you seek His face here in the holy services of this church since the last Anniversary Feast of your church. In how many Eucharists has He fed you with Himself. And now, to day, after working in your souls for all the year past, He has a new step for you to take. He makes a fresh demand upon you. He calls you nearer to Himself. He asks you to give up something more for Him. He invites you to be still more fully His Own, and to taste of the happiness of a more thorough surrendering of yourselves to Him. He has shown you great things; He says to you that you shall "see greater things than these."

Let me beseech you all to take care. Do not hold back. Do not lose yourselves in what is merely outward and passing. There is a very real danger here. It is hardly possible for any one of you who loves this church not to take an interest in the services of to-day. You can hardly help feeling something of the excitement caused by them. You perhaps enter eagerly into the preparations for them, and take your

part with delight in what you have been looking forward to. It is only too possible for all this to do you harm. All this interest and excitement may only tie your thoughts and affections the more fast to earth. It may only be a more subtle form of self-pleasing. And so you will lose the real blessing of such days as these. While you are busy with the things that speak of God, you will forget God Himself. Do not do so. Try to use the services of these days so as to gain some real advance in the service of God. Just as a skilful swimmer would throw himself upon some strong wave that he might be borne upon it high up on the shore, so throw yourselves into the swelling wave of Church life that is rolling on to-day. Use the solemn services of to-day to bear you onward, higher and higher up the shore of everlasting life.

Look at the history of the text and you will see that such advance is granted by God to those who are seeking Him in earnest. See how Nathanael was led on by God. God gave him the Holy Scriptures to guide him. He used these, and studied them, so that he was on the look-out for the Messiah of Whom Moses and the prophets wrote. Then God sent him a call through Philip. Philip told him that he had found the Messiah. There seemed to be everything against the truth of what Philip told him, but Nathanael

went to see if it was true. He was ready to look into the matter. At once he went to our Blessed Lord. Even while he was coming, our Blessed Lord showed Nathanael that He knew him, and could read his heart. "Jesus saith of him, 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.'" This was a step on for Nathanael. He felt that this could be no common man who claimed to be able to look in and pronounce that the heart was right with God. 'How can this be?' he says. 'Whence knowest Thou me?' Jesus answered, and said unto him, 'Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.'" Oh, strange, strange! When he was alone, communing with God, as it seems, in secret under the fig tree, hidden from man, his spirit feeling that there was One alone with him, his heart laid bare to one eye alone, in that moment our Lord says He was with Nathanael. The word smote upon Nathanael's heart. He felt that he had to do with One whose gaze could follow him everywhere; out of the circle of Whose surrounding presence he could not flee. And so he cries out, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God! Thou art the King of Israel!"

Even this was great faith. His earnestness, his sincerity, his willingness to learn had been highly blessed. He showed that he felt that the eye of God was able to search him through and through, and

that he could not move out of the presence of God. But was this all which he had to learn? No, this is no more than what we call natural religion. There were higher things for him to reach yet. Our Lord said unto him, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." What was this that he was to see? What new wonder was he to learn? You will say, perhaps, that he was to see the holy angels waiting on our blessed Lord. Could this be what he was to see? They did wait upon our Lord. At his Birth they burst from the cloud that hides them, and showed themselves in hosts to the wondering shepherds, and sang forth the praises of the Love of our Lord. When His sore Temptation was over, and He was worn by the struggle, and faint from His long Fast, they came to minister to Him. But this could not be what Nathanael was to see. In the agony in the garden an angel strengthened our Blessed Lord, but Nathanael was not there to see it. Angels were at the sepulchre, to tell the glad news that our Lord was risen, but Nathanael was not there. Angels came down, after His Ascension, and these, perhaps, Nathanael did see. In the glory of His Judgment,

angels will be in throngs around Our Lord, but the great vision of His tremendous majesty has not yet broken on the world. No doubt all through His life the angels were surrounding our Lord, and watching Him and bending over Him. They were eager, we may well believe, to do anything that He would permit them to do. We can imagine what a joy it must have been to them to be summoned to His side. We know that, at the hour when He was taken, more than twelve legions of those blessed spirits would have come to His aid, if it had been His will. But this cannot be what our Lord meant. There was surely some further mystery wrapped up in those words, "Ye shall see the heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." What does it mean?

Surely our Blessed Lord is speaking of heaven and earth being made one, of God and man being brought together in His Person. As we hear the words, "Ye shall see the heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man;" as we notice that those words were spoken to the Israelite indeed, our minds run back to Jacob lying asleep at Bethel, and seeing the wonderful sight of the ladder set up between earth and heaven, and the angels passing up and down, as he gazed. And so the full meaning of the words opens out to us. The

ladder is the type of our Blessed Lord. Through His being made man heaven is opened ; heaven and earth are brought together. As St. Chrysostom says, when the King of Heaven came down to dwell in this world, earth became heaven. The glory, the power, the majesty of heaven stooped to take up its abode on earth. The Kingdom of Heaven, the Church of which our Blessed Lord is the King, was set up here, and so angels and men were joined together in a wonderful order.

Is not this indeed a greater thing than what Nathanael had learnt when first he came to our Lord? It is really the whole difference between Natural and Supernatural Religion, between the order of nature and the order of grace. It is much indeed to know that there is a God. Perhaps we who have known this from our childhood do not see what a great gain this is. It is more still to feel His presence, to know that, move where we will, do whatever we may, we never are where God is not. Alone, or in the crowd ; here, in this holy place, or in our most private room in the midst of our companions and friends, or in the solitary walk in the dark night, we are always with God. It is more still really to bring home to ourselves that there is such a searching power about the eye of God, that our most secret thoughts and wishes lie as bare to Him as the letters

in an open book to the eye of one that can read.

But what comes from this? Sometimes fear, and dread. Men shrink from God, as they feel how pure He is, and what they are in His sight. They tremble before Him, they would go and bury themselves in the heart of the earth to escape from Him, if it could be done. Or, on the other hand, if they see something of the tenderness of the love of God and of the beauty of His holiness, they long after Him; they crave to be brought near to Him; they feel that they would give the world to love Him; they find that nothing short of giving themselves up to Him will satisfy their longings. They are ready to confess that, great a thing as it is to know God, it would be far, far greater so to love Him as to be made one with Him.

Oh, brethren, brethren, this is the greater thing which is granted to us in the Church. It is that greater thing that was hinted at to Nathanael. It is that greater thing within the full enjoyment of which we live. There can be no need to do more than remind you how this is so. We may be made one with God through our Blessed Lord Who is God, and Who was made one with us when He was made Flesh, and dwelt in our nature. We may be made one with God through the Blood of the Cross on which our Blessed

Lord offered Himself to bring us to God. We may be made one with God through the Sacrament of Baptism, in which we are born again to God, and through the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist in which the life of God is nourished in the soul. And so our Blessed Lord's words come true: "The angels of God ascend, and descend upon the Son of Man." Ah, it is one of those sayings that partly unveil the wonders, and mysteries, and miracles of grace in the midst of which we live. The angels of God ascend and descend upon the Son of Man. Try and grasp this truth to-day. It may be a new step in faith for you in your dedication week. Christ and His Church are one. The suffering that touches the Church, it touches Christ too. He said from heaven to Saul, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest Thou Me?" What is done to His members on earth, that our Lord counts as done to Him, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." He identifies Himself with us, He is in us, we are in Him. We are "members of His body," made out "of His flesh, and of His bones." So close is our union with Him, that S. Paul says, even now "we sit together with Him in heavenly places."

See the angels ascend to the Son of Man. Our Lord is high above the angels in His heavenly

glory, far above principalities, and powers, and every name that is named. They may soar ever higher and higher, but still above them is the Man Christ Jesus. Above all the ranks of angels is One Who is our brother, One who had, Who has an earthly mother, One Who has shared our weaknesses and our sorrows. Higher and higher the angels may soar, but our Lord is infinitely above them still. Higher and higher they may rise in knowledge, but they cannot rise to the height of His knowledge. Higher and higher they may rise towards perfection, but even higher is the wondrous perfection of Him Who is the most perfect of all creatures, because in Him the creature is knit for ever to the perfection of the Creator. Higher and higher they may rise in love, as they gaze on the glory of God, and bask in the light of His love, and gather reflections of His love into their own spirits ; but ever higher than their most burning love is the love of Him Who is One with the Father through the bond of the Spirit of love, Who lives in the Communion of the Holy Ghost. Higher and higher they may rise in bliss, as ages intensify this bliss, but higher still is His bliss Who is the Source and Fountain of all happiness. Nay, surely one main cause of their happiness must be the gazing on and admiring His perfections, and the wondering at that love which has both stooped lower than their

own to succour us, and soared higher in the perfection of the fulfilment of the Father's will.

So the angels ascend to the Son of Man.

And then, oh, further marvel! oh, joy and awful thought for us—they descend upon the Son of Man. Fresh from gazing on our Blessed Lord in His glory, the angels come down to us who are the members of Christ. They see His likeness in us; they come forth to wait upon us, to watch round us, to shield us, because we are His, because, in working for us, they can do Him service. They are ready to keep off evil from us, because every stain of sin on our souls is a blot upon His likeness. They guide, cheer, comfort, encourage us, because they have seen in Him what we shall one day be; for St. John says that “we shall be like Him.” So St. Paul says that the “worshipping spirits” who offer their service to Him on high are “sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation” below. So they descend upon the Son of Man, glad to do anything for Him in His members.

Yea, but can it be that they descend upon Christ in a still more mysterious way? They find Him here working in His Church. They recognise His life in the souls of the regenerate. They adore His graces in the elect, as one might rejoice to see the likeness of a father showing itself in the features of

a child. They mark the radiance of the glory of Christ spreading over the souls of the saints as they are "changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord."

And if this be so, if they hail every token of His presence about us, in us, can they fail to hail His most wonderful presence at the altar? At least St. Chrysostom speaks with a glowing faith of angels bending and adoring around the Holy Table while the sacred mysteries are celebrated. And we at that time speak of angels and archangels as joining in our adoration.

And so, by a strange and varying reverse, they ascend to us in Him where our nature is enthroned on high; they descend to Him in us, where He dwells and imparts Himself. They adore Him there on high; they serve Him here below. And yet they adore Him here also below, and serve Him there on high.

Oh, strange union between God and man—oh, blessed meeting of our weakness with His might, of our impurity with His spotlessness, of our death with His life! Are not these indeed greater things than Nathanael knew and saw when first he came to our Lord? If it is much to see that He knows our hearts, is it not far greater to know Him as the changer and converter of the heart? If it is much to understand

that we are always in His presence, is it not far more to have Him present in us, Himself the very life of the soul ; and so to have all the powers of heaven pledged to guard, and bless, and cherish us, because we are His ?

And now see what follows from these great truths.

(a.) The first thing that we should learn is a strong feeling of the Majesty of the Presence of our Lord with His Church. Imagine what it is to have Him moving and working upon us ! How pure, how holy He is ! The very angels adore Him with trembling. They cover their faces with their wings, and bow abashed and full of awe before Him. And He is so close to us. The friend that comes and stands face to face with us, and takes us by the hand, and fixes his gaze upon us, and looks into our eyes, is not so close to us as our Lord.

How full of reverent watchfulness, then, ought we to be not to grieve His eye, to shock His piercing gaze ! See what Jacob felt, when the glorious throngs of angels attending upon God brought home to him that God in all His greatness was close to him ; he says, " How dreadful is this place ! Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." He was full of fear. What ought we, then, to feel who have our Lord so close to us ! How ought we to move, act, and speak as if we felt that we were indeed

enfolded in this mighty presence ! And how is this awe to be shown ? First, plainly by watching against sin. Think only what a bad, or unkind, or untrue word must be when spoken by one of us, and received straight from our mouths into the mind of our Lord Who is always by us. How it must afflict and affront His loving presence ! Think again what uncharitable feelings, or bitter contempt, or harsh pride, or reckless following of our own will must be to Him. His presence is to us as it were a bright mirror, and every unholy desire or feeling dims it, as the breath dims the mirror ; not defiling it—that it could not do—but overclouding the brightness of the joy with which He watches those that are pure. Show, then, that you feel how near He is, by most anxious watchfulness against all which He hates.

(*b.*) But, then, welcome His presence also by loving adoration. Oh, if the angels descend to adore Him, here present amongst us, how much more have we reason to adore Him ! What has our Lord not been to us ! What has He not done for us ! He never died for angels. He never was made an angel. He does not bear their nature. But He has been made one with us : He has suffered for us. Let us show by our every act here that we feel what He has done—yea, what He is Who has done so much for us. This is, I suppose, the real meaning of all

that is done here in this holy place. Why do we adorn the place of His sanctuary? Why do we try to give it majesty and beauty? Why do we strive to perfect the music here? Why, above all, do we make the altar shine with its special magnificence? Is this done to please our own eyes and ears? If so, perish every worthless ornament, silence every strain of music. At least let us not indulge ourselves, please ourselves, worship ourselves here. But if everything is done here to make men feel that there is One here Who deserves all, and more than all that we can offer Him, then every sight and sound of beauty will help to carry up the mind to Him Whose beauty is fair above all.

(c.) And so let us pass above these things, and use them as aids to cherish faith in the unseen powers of God that work in the Church. It is upon us ourselves that the greatest wonders of God are worked. For within the Church the Blood of Christ is ever washing away sin, and the grace of Christ is ever changing the soul, and the mind of Christ is ever passing into our minds, and the Spirit of Christ is ever transforming our spirits. Far, far greater are all these revelations of God than those which we have of Him in the works of nature. He does, He does indeed show us something of what He is by the glorious beauty of the whole world around

us. He makes us feel something of His Presence through these. But, after all, it is not the majesty of the rolling sea ; it is not the dazzling light of the sun ; it is not the vast, deep blue sky ; it is not the woods of spring and autumn that stretch out in their thousand hues before us ; it is not the towering height of the mountain, nor the soft loveliness of the valley ; it is not one, nor all of these that are the great things of God. No, greater than these is that strange, wondrous, loving power by which He takes possession of the soul, knits it to Himself in His Church, imparts His own life to it, lives in it, and makes it live with His life. It is this that angels watch, and marvel at, and bend down to adore ; it is from this that they learn new reasons for adoration ; for it is “by the Church,” by what is done to the Church, that “the manifold wisdom of God” is made known unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places.

Brethren, dear brethren, take this thought into your minds ; meditate upon it ; make it your own ; live by it. Angels watch over you, minister to you, love you, guard you. Why ? Because, in coming down to aid you, they minister to the Son of Man. The Powers of heaven must needs be on your side, because you have been made one with the King of Heaven. Press, then, ever to a closer union with Him. Bring every sin to your Lord to be washed

away by Him. Speak to Him plainly, fully, earnestly of every temptation, that He may overcome it in you. Receive Him in the blessed Eucharist into your souls ; and there, down in the secret depths of your souls, seek to have your will united with His. See what there is in you that you can bend to His will ; in what you can thwart, deny yourselves ; sacrifice yourselves to Him. And learn for yourselves what He is able to do for you. It will be "exceeding abundantly above all that " you "ask or think."

VIII.

MAN REVEALED TO HIMSELF.

Preached at St. John Baptist Frome Dedication Feast, 1867.

St. John i. 22, 23.

“Then said they unto him, ‘Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?’ He said, ‘I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord.’”

IT is a wise and holy plan of the Church, my brethren, to make us think of the saints. From time to time the Church brings the name of one of the great servants of God before us by keeping a day in memory of him. She says to us, as it were, Look at that man; see what the grace of God did for him; see how unlike he was to the common run of men; see how pure, how holy, how unworldly, how blessed he was; you cannot help admiring him: well, what he was, that you may be; for it was by the grace of God that he was what he was. This is a good plan, for it prevents

us from falling in contentedly with the low standard of the mass of the world. It shows us that there is such a thing as holiness ; that in the midst of this world, with all its snares, and dangers, and temptations, and difficulties, men really have given themselves up to God, and so loved Him, as to put Him before all else in the world. And, amongst the great saints of God, very few are greater than Saint John the Baptist. And, amongst the strange things which have been told us of the saints, very few are more strange than what we read in the text of St. John the Baptist. And yet perhaps you may be inclined to say, " I do not see anything very strange in this history. What does it come to ? A man is asked who he is, and he answers : he gives a plain answer to a plain question." You are right, my brethren ; that is all the history. Yet look a little more closely into the matter. Perhaps that plain answer to that plain question is one of the rarest, strangest things that can be. Perhaps it is one of the most astounding proofs of the real holiness of St. John. Ah, if you would see how hard it is to give a simple, true answer to that question, imagine what you would say if the question were put to you ? If you were asked, " Who art thou ?" would you say neither more nor less than you really are ? You know best, I cannot tell what your answer would be. But this is certain, that it is a very

rare thing to know oneself. It is more rare still to be humble and sincere enough to speak the simple truth about ourselves. Yet at least one day we must know ourselves. One day we must be known for what we are. One day the light from God will come pouring into our hearts with all its clear, searching, revealing brightness. One day we must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and each one of us give an account of himself to God. One day the cloak of self-deceit, which so many wrap round them, must shrivel at the consuming fire of the unerring judgment. One day to each one of us the question will come, with a demand for an answer, "Who art thou? What hast thou done? How hast thou lived? What is thy real character? What is thy true inner self?" And, the whole man laid bare, the spirit, like an open book before God with all its acts, thoughts, and intentions printed on it, must give back its reply to God. Ah, we must make a true confession then. Why not, oh, why not now?

You would wish to do so. You have perhaps tried to do so. There is very much in the character of this day which you are keeping to help you to do so. Let me try to help you.

I. What is it which hides a man's real state from him?

1. Sometimes it is the fact that great things have

been done for him. He comes, perhaps, of good parents, he is the child of a father and mother that are well known and looked up to for their holy and religious lives. Or it may be that he belongs to what we call a noble family. Or possibly his father is famous for learning, or eloquence, or skill and success in business. And so the son is known and noticed for the parent's sake, and he puts his father's fame down to himself, as if it belonged to him. He prides himself upon it. He wraps himself up in it, as a man may wrap himself up in fine clothes. He forgets what he is in himself.

Sometimes, again, a man has been placed by God above others. He has some particular work to do for others. He is a teacher, or a priest, a guide or an adviser. He is a leader in some particular set, or has the control and management of affairs given into his hand. And so he is tempted to look at himself in his relation to others. And, again, he too forgets what he is in himself.

Sometimes, again, a man has great powers. He has great gifts. Mark the word. He knows things which others do not know. He is in advance of his time and age. Perhaps he is a great speaker. He has that strange, marvellous power of moving and persuading masses of men. He can so clothe his own thoughts in words as to make them bring men to the

truth. He sees his own mind act upon others, and pass into others, till they think, and feel with him, and follow him. He feels his influence over others. And so he dwells upon these powers which he has till he forgets that they are not from himself, that they are not himself. He is blinded by the greatness of his gifts. He does not see what he is.

There is a still more subtle snare. Sometimes the circumstances of a man's life, or what we call his disposition, or some unusual call from God, separate him from his fellows. He does not care for the common pleasures of the world. He can live without its comforts. He withdraws himself from its business, its interests, and its occupations. The things which are temptations to others are no temptations to him. His tastes lead him rather to delight in what is pure, and good, and noble. There is perhaps no man who is more in danger of not knowing himself. He may fancy that the very fact that he is hedged round and guarded from certain temptations is a proof that he has conquered the temptations ; or, while he sees that he does not fall just exactly in the same way that others do, he may fancy that he does not fall at all.

All this makes it really hard for a man to know himself.

2. But we must add to this another great cause of self-deceit. We are too apt to think ourselves to be

what others take us for. And they perhaps think highly of us either for the good that they really see in us, but which does not come from ourselves ; or it may be that they are utterly and entirely mistaken about us. They take us for what we are not.

II. And now, my brethren, before we go any further, see that there were all these reasons why St. John should not have known himself simply and truly. Master this, and you will see at least one excellence which makes the Saint stand out so brightly in the roll of the great servants of God.

I. Why, here indeed was one who was the son of good parents, who were blameless in the ordinances of God. Here was one who came of a high and honoured race. Here was one who was the greatest of the long line of Prophets, who was even more than a Prophet. He was marked out by God as the one special teacher of his nation. He spoke with command and authority, even to the chosen religious leaders of the country. He was followed by crowds, who were moved, and awed, and attracted by him. He had secret revelations from God of things which he alone was allowed to know. So strange was his power as a teacher that he stirred the hearts of all from the highest to the lowest. The mass of men counted him for a prophet. Later on, even Herod, while he quailed before his rebukes, heard him gladly,

and was awed into obeying him in many things. It is strange how great men in the midst of their bad lives do respect those who boldly tell them of their sin. At least in this Church we cannot forget how Charles the Second honoured Bishop Ken for rebuking his vice. So it was with St. John. The bad King Herod could not help feeling the force of his brave, pure, true character. At one time or another, Court and Camp, Village and Town, felt and owned his influence, so great and high were his powers, so remarkable the success of his work. And his life was as remarkable as his work. Not only did the world do him homage, but it left him unattracted by its attractions. The world could praise him, follow him, admire him. The world could not make him its own. He lived above it. He did not care for it. He would take nothing at its hands. He was its master, not its hired servant. Oh, pattern of preachers! Amongst those born of women, almost single and alone! Severe in life, refusing all softness, and luxury, and enjoyment; condescending, as it were, only to take the barest necessities of existence, separated from the haunts and companionship of men, he seemed not to be open to the weaknesses, scarcely even to the feeling of the wants of human nature. Such was the character of almost super-human sanctity which he bore.

2. And then, almost as a natural consequence, men looked up to him as one far above themselves. He seemed to them as one who had stepped down out of heaven to them, and they owned in him a claim for entire submission. They flocked to him, they laid bare the secrets of their hearts, they confessed their sins to Him (never was a Confessional so thronged with penitents). They asked for his advice and guidance, they submitted themselves to him, and took their rules of life from him ; they left themselves in his hands (never was a Director on whom men so implicitly hung). Aye, even more, so did they feel His powers, His sanctity, His strange unearthly influence over them, that they took Him for the Christ. They thought that only He for Whom all hearts were waiting and longing could so move and subdue their own hearts.

Ah, my brethren, was there ever such an opportunity for pride? Was there ever a clothing of gifts and powers which might so well have hidden from a man what he really was? Does it not almost make us giddy to see one of ourselves at such a perilous height? Do we not almost seem to feel that he must fall?

3. And yet see. When they asked him who he was, what did he answer? "He confessed, and denied not, I am not the Christ. And they asked

Him, 'What then? Art thou Elias?' And He saith, 'I am not.' 'Art thou that Prophet?' And he answered, 'No.' Then said they unto Him, 'Who art thou? that we may give an answer unto them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?'" Ah, listen to his answer. The probing, searching question had been put—the question so sure to bring out any lurking self-deceit, any pride, or vanity. And what does he say? It is a strange answer, strange for its truth, strange for its lowly forgetfulness of self,—but, oh, perhaps more strange still for the great things which it says about self, only to put self down, and to exalt God. "Who art thou? Son of Zacharias! almost adoring crowds wait to hear, who art thou?" "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord." "I am but a voice, a sound. I am but an instrument of God. He works, indeed; He speaks through me; but not that you may think of me. No, look away from me to Him for Whom I have to prepare you. 'There standeth One amongst you, Whom ye know not.' Fix on Him your hearts, your faith, your love." See here—here is true knowledge of self: here is the simple, humble feeling that all gifts, all powers, all work, all success come from God. Here is strange sincerity, giving all glory to God, taking nothing to self. Here is the absorbing thought of

God. Here is the clear sight of the greatness to which God had raised the man, and yet all seen to come so entirely from God that the man's own self is absolutely lost and forgotten in the thought of God.

III. And now at once compare this true, simple, humble answer which St. John gave about himself with what we think and say about ourselves. If the question were put to each one of you, "Who art thou?" what would you say? what answer would you give? Remember that the true answer is to describe yourself as just that which you are in God's sight, neither more nor less. Would that be your first notion about yourself? Is it your common notion? If you were to give an account of yourself, would your account agree with what God knows you to be? Would you not make yourself out to be what you wish others to think of you, and perhaps as being what they actually do think you to be?

I. "Who art thou?" Listen to the answer of the foolish heart: "I belong to such a noble family. I am the son of such a well-known man. I am the owner of such a house. I am the head of such a firm. I am the master of one of our largest manufacturing. I am one of the most skilful mechanics. I am well known for honesty and respectability. I am a marked man in the circle that I move in. My cleverness, my learning, my ability are talked of on

every side." Or it may be, "I am the favourite of my companions ; or the best singer in the choir ; or the most sparkling in conversation ; or, perchance, praised for my beauty ; or for my dress ; or for my knowledge of the ways of the world. Or my character stands high as that of a religious man.

It may be so. But what do you mean by your answer ? Either you are exalting yourself, and making yourself, as it were, a God to yourself and to others ; or, at the least, you are turning away your thoughts from your real self. You let the noise of the praise of others drown the whisper of your own heart. There is a whisper of self-reproach which you do not wish to hear. There is, it may be, a secret sin which you allow to be cloaked and covered over by what others say of you.

2. Ah, brethren, away with the thought of man. Remember the eye of God—it is fixed upon you. It has followed you all through life. It reads, it searches you now. The gaze of God pierces into you as if you were alone before Him. He sees us not as a mass, a crowd, a congregation, but each man singly and alone. Take as if it came from Him the question, "Who art thou ?" See rank, wealth, pomp, show, cleverness, learning, reputation, the praise of men fall off from us. What art thou in the sight of God ? Naked and bare we

are before Him. And what do we feel ourselves to be ?

We are His creatures. All that we are came from Him. He brought us out of nothing. We are nothing in His sight. Yes, dust and ashes, What art thou ?

Aye, but thou feelest that now life is in thee—thou art at least a living man. Live on, then ; canst thou ? Thou didst not choose when to begin to live. Choose how long thou wilt live. Thou canst not. “What is your life ? It is even a vapour that passeth away, and cometh not again.” “He taketh away their breath ; they die, and are turned again to their dust.” Thou art a poor beggar depending on the charity of God for every breath. He alone holdeth your soul in life.

Ah, but at least, while life lasts, thou canst feel the powers that thou hast. Poor man ! Who gave thee every power ? “What hast thou that thou hast not received ?” “Who maketh thee to differ from another man ?”

Nay, let me change my voice. Steward of God ! thou hast nothing of thine own. What art thou doing with the property of God ? Every shilling that thou hast is God’s money, put into thy care to be spent for Him. How art thou spending what He lends thee ? Every power thou hast came from Him. It was given thee that thou mightest do good work in the

household of God. How art thou using thy powers ? “Who art thou?” What ! a thief, spending thy Lord’s money on thyself ? An impostor ? Making himself out to be the Master.

Perhaps with this thought will at last come the feeling of what thou art. Who art thou ? Ah, let us answer :—“Eye of God, close, look not at me ; take off Thy fixed gaze ; do not so pierce me. What am I ? A sinner—a sinner, foul in Thy sight, stained and impure. Whatever man may think, I know what I am before Thee. My rank, my wealth, my fair name, the praise and opinion of men, what are they ? Only like the ivy that hangs about a ruin. Who am I ? What have I been ? What am I ? Past sins rise up against me and accuse me. There is sin working in me at this moment which makes me almost hate myself, and long, if it only could be, to flee from myself. Oh, the thoughts that have passed through this mind —the words that have fallen from these lips—the neglect and carelessness of God that has marked this life. “Who art thou ?” Do not ask me, O my God—do not make me think. Let me at least forget my nothingness, my misery, and my sin. Leave me in the darkness and the gloom, where I may hide my wretchedness. Do not bring me out into the light.

IV. Yes, dear brethren, out into the light you must come—out into the clear, soft light of the love of God.

Let it gleam on you. Let it fall on you till it cheers and gladdens you. You have wondered that I have drawn so sad a picture for so bright a day. Have I done amiss? I have tried to show you what you are in yourselves, that you may see and wonder more at what you are, what you may be in God, in Christ, in the Church of Christ, in the Kingdom of Heaven, in that strange system in which the nature of God transforms the nature of men, in which man becomes a new creature. Thou art the purchase of the Blood of God's own Son. Thou art the child of God, loved, guarded, blessed, and kept by Him. Thou art a member of Christ—His life works in thee. Thou hast been taken out of the power of Satan, and translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. God's angels love to watch and minister to thee for His sake. God's Saints in one vast band, both on this side and on the other side of the grave, pray for thee, and aid thee with their prayers. "Who art thou?" I scarcely dare to say. Either I must say too little, or I must say what seems far, far too much for such as we are. Thou art the brother of the Son of God. Thou art the temple of the Holy Ghost. Thou art a partaker of the Divine Nature. Thou art Christ's and Christ is God's. Christ is made unto thee wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Who art thou? In thyself nothing, worse than

nothing—a worm, dust and ashes, a blot and an offence on the face of the Creation of God. In Christ, through the power of His passion cleansing thee, through the force of His grace working in thee, thou mayest be a joy and a delight to God, His loved and cherished child, and growing into the image of His Own dearly loved Son.

Is not this, my brethren, the very lesson of to-day, the very lesson which echoes out to us on all sides from this church? You who love this church, and have laboured with a labour of love to make it what it is, know best what it was. It is likely enough that it was once, as so many churches have been in the days when the love of God was so cold that anything was thought good enough for Him, ruined, and marred, and stained, and discoloured. And what is it now? Perhaps there is scarcely another church in all the country so full of beauty. And you were delighted to see it growing out of the state into which it had fallen into this new beauty. Have you remembered that all this time you were engraving a parable in stones? Yes, you have been raising a monument of the love of God in the midst of you. Ruined and decayed churches, they are types and representations of fallen man. And churches restored are types of man restored. And God loves to restore His churches. God loves to restore us, who are the temples in which

He dwells. And as they grow into beauty—the beauty of holiness, before His eye He rejoices over them. And this work He has been seeking to do on you. He has been seeking to change you from glory to glory. Look round this church, then. See how it speaks of the restoring love of God. There is the Cross, which tells us how God gave His Own Son to die that we might be forgiven. There is the Font at which our sins were washed away, and we were made God's children, and the new life of Christ passed into us. There is the Church itself, the House of Prayer, where our Blessed Lord is present with us to give our prayers their prevailing power. There are the Figures of the Saints gleaming out upon us from the Windows to remind us what the grace of God can do. There is this Pulpit, from which God has guided you, His children, by him whose firm and loving wisdom has been a guide to hundreds in our days of trial and difficulty. There is the Altar at which the One priceless Sacrifice is pleaded, and from which our Blessed Lord has given Himself to be the Food and Life of our souls.

In the sight of these, while the memories of all the tender acts of God's love to you, float round these walls, while the air breathes of holy lessons that you have listened to here, while angels perhaps are adoring God for miracles of mercy done on you which

you have almost forgotten, I ask you, "Who art thou?"

And now, then, I make my claim for Him Who has poured out His love so richly on thee. Think of what thou hast been, of what thou art, of what thou mayest be. Think of what God has given thee, and calculate what it is right to give to Him to-day. Count the mercies that God has shown you. Count the graces that He has given you. Count the moments in which you have tasted of His love. Count the sufferings of our Blessed Lord, the tears that He shed for us, the throbs that racked His Body on the Cross. Count the lights, the inspirations, the warnings, the persuasions, which He has granted to you in His Church. If these are few and small, then let your gift be small ; but, if they outnumber the stars of heaven, give to God as with a trusting heart that knows not how to give too much. Hear Him, as you make that offering, say, "Who art thou?" and answer Him, "I am one who owes Thee all, who owes Thee himself, and who would fain give Thee a token of his love, as a child may give to its Father and a creature to His God."

Give Him what? All thou hast—time, talents, powers, money, yes, but thyself.

IX.

KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST THE STRENGTH OF
WORK FOR HIM.

Preached at Wantage. June 30, 1868.

St. Matthew xvi. 15.

“He saith unto them, ‘But whom say ye that I am?’”

I AM ashamed that I should have to stand here to-day, dear brethren, to speak on the subject of Sisterhood life. I am ashamed, deeply ashamed for myself, for every word of praise, and of admiration of that high and devoted life sounds at least as something of a reproach to those who are content with less devotion. I am ashamed too that it should in any way be forced upon me to advise those who have undertaken this life. But still more am I ashamed that such a cause should need to be pleaded at all. Brethren, a thousand voices plead it daily ; a thousand voices, that speak with a mighty and yet

most touching eloquence. All the sorrows of humanity plead the cause of these who have banded themselves together to be the comforters of those in sorrow. The ignorance of humanity pleads the cause of those who are ready to turn that ignorance into the blessed knowledge of God. Yes, the very sins of men plead the cause of those whose task, whose work, whose vow, whose happiness it is to rescue sinners from their sins. The tears of the sorrowing, the sighs of the distressed, the groans of those in anguish, the downcast look of the desolate, the aching of the broken heart, the speechless and unspeakable misery of those who have lost, or almost lost, God, the deepening gloom of despondency that knows not how to find a way of return to God, the black darkness of a despair trembling on the edge of the still more awful darkness of eternal rejection—all these speak to us, move us, urge us to help those who are living for the work of soothing these sorrows, and lightening this darkness. "Sisters of Mercy!" the very name alone is the most moving sermon. Ah, we have known ourselves what the sorrows of life are. We have seen them in others, we have felt, we have tasted them ourselves. In some form or other we have been pierced by them. Perhaps at times the sense of the multitude of griefs all round about us has so grown upon the sight of our souls, that they have seemed to come bearing up

against us, wave upon wave, like a great ocean threatening to overwhelm us. Well, then, every separate sorrow pleads for these who long to be the comforters of those who are sinking in the sorrows of life.

But there are other voices that speak for these sisters, still a thousand more. In your perplexities, dear brethren, you have doubtless known again and again what it was to meet with a kind and loving guide who has shown you the way out of a maze of difficulties. In some old hour of gloom you can remember how one loving smile gleamed in upon your darkness and lighted it up. When you were almost broken down under some heavy burthen of grief, there may have been some one whose ready sympathy shared the burthen with you. When you had yourself gone astray, there may have been some gentle, loving voice that won you back. Stranger still, when you seemed to be an outcast from the world, and your heart was almost fierce in its rebellion against what appeared to you the harsh sentence of others, or when perhaps your heart was almost dead as a stone within you, some one may have come, and sat down by your side, and taken your hand, and looked into your eyes, and shown you that you were understood, that you were pitied,—ah, better, that you were loved—and the dull

stone melted within you, and the fountains of the great deep of a new sorrow were broken up in you, and a new light dawned on you,—yes, a new life beat within you,—and you saw that you were not lost to God. Such are the triumphs of sympathy, of compassion, of tenderness, of love. Such are the ways in which a brother, a sister, a wife, above all a mother, by voice, by look, by smile, by touch, by whisper, by glance, have turned our sorrows into joy. These memories of the past, these words, these tones, these whispers of those that have loved us, and helped us in the battle and stress of life, they live in our hearts, and plead for these Sisters of Mercy. For, dear brethren, there are those—too, too many—who have neither mother, nor friend, nor wife to care for them; and the Sister of Mercy becomes to all these what those who have loved and felt for you have been to you. She is bound to live, to labour, to suffer for, and with, all sufferers whose path she crosses.

And, now, how is the Sister of Mercy to learn this? It is a work above the nature, above the power, of man. It can only be learnt by driving out the principle of selfishness, and making love the moving power of the whole life. And how can this be brought about? Only by a close, constant, personal union and communion with our Blessed Lord; by

such a severance from the world, and even from the common ties of life, as will make the Sister live in the constant presence of One Person,—so that the thought of Him, and the knowledge of Him, grows upon the soul, and takes possession of it, and transforms it. See how our Lord Himself teaches us in the text how blessed it is to be so severed from the world, and what lessons are learnt about Himself by those who live in close and constant intercourse with Him? He asked the disciples, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? What is the opinion of the world about Me? Those who see Me from time to time, who hear now and then some of the wonders that I have worked, who listen occasionally to My teaching, what do they say of Me?” Listen to the answer; “Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.” They rank Thee among the great teachers that have moved the minds of men. They admire, they are awed by Thee, they acknowledge that Thou sharest something of power, of influence, of greatness, with the great prophets that have gone before. They see no more in Thee than this. “But whom say ye, then, that I am?” says our Lord. He expects more, you see, from the disciples. It is as if He said, “You have been constantly with Me, I called you, I separated you from your fellows, I

drew you out of your homes, I fixed on you the power of my attractions, I spoke to you from without, and from within. I brought you to Myself ; you have lived within a charmed and Divine circle, in the inner sanctuary from which the manifestations of Me have gone forth. You have been My privileged friends. I have called you not servants, but friends. The servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth. You have seen My miracles, and in seeing them have learnt not only the Divine power that has gone forth from Me, but the love that has been ever moving Me to heal the sorrows of men in a thousand Redemptive Acts. You have watched My life. You have seen its marvellous perfections, and have been in the way of learning what was the source from which the perfections flowed, and whether My life is the life of One Who is only Man, or of One Who is more than man. You have seen what I have been to yourselves. You know how I have read your thoughts, and made you able to read them ; how I have opened to you what you are in yourselves, and what God is, and may be to you. You have had your sorrows ; is there anything in Me that has shown you where to find comfort under them ? You have had your difficulties ; have I guided you out of them ? You have had your longings for something beyond your own reach, for higher aims than you had known

before, for joys above this earth which you are only yet beginning to understand ; have I satisfied them in any measure? Do you feel that there is in Me the power to satisfy them more still? You, to whom I have done so much, to whom I can do so much more, whom say ye that I am?"

Hear again the answer, brethren, from the lips—from the heart of the warm, ardent saint whom we were commemorating only yesterday. Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

You see now why our Blessed Lord had called them to that close and blessed fellowship with Himself. It was that they might learn Who and what He was to them.

Was this all? Was it only that they might learn that for themselves? Ah, no, brethren. Who were these? These were they who were to go out into the world to be its guides, its leaders, its comforters. They were to bear the image, the likeness of their Master, to stand in His place, to be the organs by which He was to work. All this is wrapped up in these words: "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." How, I ask you, could they be to the thousands of sufferers round them in any way ministers for our Blessed Lord, unless they had learnt what He was Himself, His tenderness, His sympathy,

His yearning over the sorrows of men, His power to heal and to deliver? How could they learn that better than by finding out in the closeness of their intimate communion with Him what He was to them—that He was worth more than all the world besides? Is not this what comes out in those words of St. John: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us). That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” Here is the heart filled with light, and joy in itself from close communion with our Lord, and longing to pour into other hearts the joy it has tasted of in itself.

Now, my brethren, it is not, I think, saying too much to say that we have here the whole plan, purpose, and meaning of Sisterhood life, and the secret of its success—nay, more, the reason why Sisters are so peculiarly fitted for the work which they have to do.

First, it is not—or at any rate it should not be—all persons who are allowed to undertake this work, but only those who seem to have a special call for it; only those who seem to be drawn by God aside from the common duties of life. There must be in some sense a clear call from God, saying, as to the apostles, “Follow Me.”

Then, next, when this call is recognised, the Sisterhood life should be so planned as to bring the Sisters into a special closeness with God. They must learn what He is in Himself, what He is to them, that they may leave all for Him, choose Him before all, bind themselves to Him, live for Him, make His love the one object of life, find their own secret heart joy in the thought of Him; and then go forth to make others know Him. They must taste to the full His consolations, the happiness of communion with Him, that they may see that every sorrow of others can be relieved by Him, every sin conquered through Him, every grace, even what seems the most unattainable, reached through Him. “Whom say ye that I am?” is our Lord’s question to the band of Sisters. This should be their answer: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Thou art the Hope of sorrowing, suffering, fallen, tempted men. Thou art the Ransom of sin-stained souls. Thou art the Redeemer of the lost. Thou art Strength in

weakness, and Light in darkness, and Life in death. Thou art our joy, and our all. Thou art the One for Whom all hearts long. If we can make Thee known, the world will be changed. To know Thee, and to find Thee, and to lose Thee no more, will be Heaven itself."

Now see how the Rule of Sisterhood life trains the Sisters in this close, personal knowledge of our Blessed Lord. They are withdrawn, as the apostles were, from the outer world. It is not too much to say that they live, as the apostles lived, in a special nearness to our Lord. They have their constant round of holy offices, which again and again bring them consciously into His presence. The very hours of those offices are memorials of the sufferings of our Blessed Lord, so that the thought of His passion is worked into their life. They are taught to be constant in the practice of meditation, so that the truths, the acts, and the words of our Blessed Lord may fix themselves in their souls. Above all, they live in continual and unbroken communion with our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. And so they come to know Him, not as a mere Teacher of Religion, not as one in a long line of Prophets, however eminent, but as their heart's Life and Stay. "Whom say ye that I am?" Sisters, He asks you. Sisters, what is your answer, your heart's answer, to Him? The Teacher

of the Christian Religion, the Christ of the Gospels, the greatest of all moralists, the purest of the sons of men, the original of the many pictures that I have admired, the theme of Christian poetry, the pattern of sublime patience. Ah, He is all this, but God forbid that He should be no more than this to you. "Whom say ye that I am?" When He asks, I dare not, I could not answer for you. But you will answer for yourselves: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Through Thee, through Thee alone we have known the possibility of finding peace with God. From Thee has come our every grace. On Thee hangs our every hope. In a thousand sorrows we have known Thee as our Comforter. In a thousand joys we have recognised our happiness as Thy gift. We have seen in Thy life what love is. We have seen in Thy death how love can give itself to others. "Whom say ye that I am?" No tongue could tell what Thou hast been to us. A whole life sacrificed to Thee could not show what we owe Thee. Thou art the light of the world, and, if we might ask one favour of Thee, it would be that we might carry some gleams of that light, and shed it into some of the poor dark hearts round us, that Thou mayest be to them what Thou hast been, what Thou art to us.

And here last we touch upon the secret of the

Success of Sisterhood work. If these Sisters, dear brethren, go forth to try and rescue the fallen, they go to work for Him to whom these fallen ones are so dear. They go fresh from the revelations of the tenderness and compassion of our Blessed Lord to be tender to others as He was tender, who said, "I came to seek and to save that which was lost."

If they go to teach the young, they know how our Blessed Lord loved children. They see in those children images of the Child at Nazareth, and they minister to Him in them.

If they sit by the sick-bed, the pains of sickness, its weakness, and its exhaustion are memorials to them of the hard bed of the Cross on which an anguish was borne for them by One to whom no man ministered in that moment, but to Whom it is their privilege to minister now.

"Whom say ye that I am?" Oh, wonder of love, wonder of privilege, and of joy for me, Thou art the Sufferer whom I soothe, Thou art the Child whom I teach, Thou art the Man of Sorrows reproduced in each aspect of human sorrow, to give me the opportunity of spending some love on Thee.

I commend to you, then, the cause of the Sisters; I ask your prayers, your sympathy, your alms for them. And I ask you to remember that in commending this to your notice I am pleading not for

them, but for a thousand sufferers whom they may soothe with the knowledge of the love of Christ. Yet no, not even for them, but for Him who allows us to-day to help those whom He calls to work with Him. To you too; to me too, He puts the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" Am I the Light of your hearts, your One hope, and Joy? Show that you believe this. There are others waiting for the consolations that you have had from Me. I ask you to aid them. Shall I, can I, ask in vain?

X.

JOY IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

Preached at St. Mary's, Cambridge. Trinity Sunday, 1887.

I Corinthians xiii. 12.

“Now we see through a glass, darkly ; but then face to face : now I know in part ; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

“NOW we see in a mirror, darkly ; but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully, even as also I am known fully.” What joy, what exultation, what ardour, what longing there is in these words ! They carry us far on—and far away—far on beyond the present time of this passing world, far away from the scene of this present life. “Then,” when time, and change, and varying seasons are past ; then, when the alternations of cloud and sunshine are over ; when doubt, and difficulty, and perplexity have been left behind ; when the strife, and struggle, and toil of the mind in its effort to reach the truth has

come to an end, then I shall know fully. Then, in a sense more complete than the words have ever yet borne, I shall be able to say, "The Darkness is past, and the true Light now shineth." Then and there in the place, wherever it may be, where God shall let me see His face, then I shall see face to face. For a moment we almost seem to be side by side with the apostle, and to be following his upturned eye and to be fixing our gaze where his is fixed. Already that eye has pierced the veil. His vision has reached the innermost shrine. Like another St. John "a door has been opened to him in heaven." A voice has said to him, "Come up, hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." Already for him "the throne is set in Heaven," and he is on the steps of the throne; and One sits on the throne, like a jasper and a sardine stone. Round about the throne are the four-and-twenty elders with their white raiment, and their heads crowned with golden crowns. The majesty, the glory, the beauty, the saintly purity of the heavenly court are gathered together in all the marvel of their perfection, but the apostle's eager gaze has passed beyond them. It has fixed itself on God. It cannot rest on anything short of Him. His spirit is crying out with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison

of Thee? My flesh, and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Then, and there, shall I see face to face; then and there shall I know fully, even as also I have been known fully. This is the ardour of his longing. The same longing was stirring in him which filled the hearts of St. Augustine and St. Monica, when they sat, the dear son's hand resting in his mother's hand, when, after all his wanderings and battlings to reach the Truth, the son had come home to God, and both looked out over the sea, their eyes and their souls straining after the shore of everlasting life and light.

But for what was the Apostle's heart yearning? He was yearning for the full knowledge of God. (*ἐπιγνώσις*). Yes, but what made him yearn for that knowledge? Because he had known the joy of knowledge, "Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully." He had tasted of the joy of knowledge, but every draught only made him thirst the more after streams more satisfying than any which this world can give: "My soul is athirst for God, yea even for the living God. When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?"

But is, then, knowledge a joy? Can it be necessary to ask this here, in this place consecrated to knowledge? All things round us witness to the fact that knowledge is believed to be a source of happiness. These colleges,

this University, the course of study, the tradition of generations of toil, the gathering of students, the labours of teachers, the prizes to encourage the acquirement of knowledge, the libraries with their stores of accumulated learning. And has not many a one here felt the keen joy, the real sense of positive happiness that comes with knowledge acquired or increased? The problem solved—the fresh discovery—or the opening of a path leading to a fresh discovery; the learning of a new language, the finer sense of the power and force of an old language; the unravelling of the history of the past; the first acquaintance with a new branch of science; the clearing up of some obscurity; the breaking in of new light; are not all these fraught with the keenest enjoyment? And yet does not every advance in knowledge make us eager for a further advance still, as mountain climbers find fresh peaks still luring them on to the delight of further efforts? Are we not ready to cry out again and again with the apostle, “We know only in part”?

And, if this be so with all forms of mere earthly knowledge, must it not be far more so with heavenly knowledge? Does the knowledge of earthly things bring the highest joy to the mind that the heart can taste of? Oh, not so, not so indeed. Those strange powers which we possess of thought, of reflection, of consideration, of meditation, of insight, of memory,

of intuition, of investigation, were not given us that they might be spent only on what one of our poets calls so well "these earth-born idols of this lower air." Man was not made only that he might know the records of history, the niceties of language, the wonders of physical science, the conclusions of mathematics. These studies may indeed do much to enlarge the heart, to widen the sympathies, to brace the powers of mind, to cultivate the character. They interest, they stimulate, they carry us out of and beyond ourselves. Possibly at times they almost dangerously delight and entrance us. But there is a point beyond all these to which all these various kinds of knowledge should lead us. We were created with all our powers of mind that we might know God. Not in vain has theology been called *Scientiarum Scientia*. The science of all sciences is the knowledge of God. To know Him, what He has done for man, what He *is* to man, what man is to Him,—nay, what He is in Himself, to know at once the Tenderness of His love and the Mystery of His Being—this is the highest exercise of man's mind ; this is the purest joy of man's heart, this is the only one true aim of life, this alone can be called life, this is the life the pulses of which begin to beat within us in this world ; this is the life which swells out into its full perfection in the world to come ; for "this is life

eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom He has sent."

Aye, and it was the joy of this knowledge which was filling the apostle's heart when he wrote these words, "Then shall I know fully, even as also I am known fully." His whole being was thrilling with a joy of the past and of the present, and he was being borne, as it were, on the crest of this wave of joy, on to the shore of a fuller, and an unending joy. Already he knows God in the tenderness of His Fatherhood, in the fulness of His pardoning love, in the atonement wrought out by the Son of God, in the might of the indwelling Spirit, in the richness of the gifts poured out on, poured into, the Church. That knowledge has grown upon him more and more since the day when the pleading voice of his Lord broke in upon him with the question, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" and won his heart to the service of the Crucified. Toil and suffering, labours among the multitude, and solitary wrestlings of his own soul in prayer, have brought home to him with increasing clearness the love, the strength, the supporting power, the majesty of God, and of God's claims upon him. In speaking, in writing, in winning others to the faith, in opening out to them the mysteries of the faith, the fulness and glory of the revelation has filled him more and more with light; "God, who commanded

the "light to shine out of darkness," has "shined in his heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Every past revelation has brought to him an increase of faith, of hope, of love, of peace, of happiness, and joy, and has taught him to realise more fully what will be the exceeding bliss of the complete revelation of God to those who are brought to see Him face to face. So rejoicing, so hoping, so exulting, so expecting, so yearning, he cries out, "Then shall I know fully, even as also I am fully known." All bars, all hindrances all veils will be withdrawn, all clouds of error, of mistake, of misapprehension will be swept away as mists are drawn up and dispelled by the outshining of the sun, and at last I shall see God in all, and all in God, know what He has been to me, what has been the meaning of His dealing with me all through life, yea even know Himself as He knows me.

And now let us see how the joy of this knowledge came so to grow in the mind of St. Paul. First, clearly because he set himself with intense earnestness to receive in all its vividness and distinctness the Revelation that came from God. He felt deeply the Tenderness of God in making known the Truth. He felt as strongly the responsibility of man for receiving into his mind the fulness of Truth in all its purity, and preserving it from all error that might dim or disturb

it. No doubt ever crossed his mind that God could be known. Still less did he question the power of God to reveal Himself. How shall not the best of all Fathers teach His children? How shall He not yearn more than any human teacher to impart knowledge to those who were willing to learn? The apostle might have conceived it possible that in a place like this some human teachers might keep their stores of knowledge to themselves, and not use them to help others. Human selfishness might make this conceivable. But the yearning Love of God for His children would not let Him leave them without the light of Truth.

Then, quick upon the thought of this love of God, came the feeling that, if God is so loving as to tell to His children the secrets of their own nature, their sin, their fall, the way of their recovery, and of their union with Himself, nay, if God goes further still and tells them even the secrets of the Mystery of His own Being, then the children in very gratitude must be ready to learn in its fulness the lessons which the heavenly Father has given them.

So see how jealously St. Paul ever guards the truth. Not an angel from heaven is to persuade us to receive any other Gospel than that which we have received. Alike teachers and taught are ever to "hold fast the form of sound words which they have received in faith

and love which is in Christ Jesus." "That good thing which was committed unto them," the Truths of the Faith, they are "to keep," as a wondrous treasure, for which they must surely give account, "by the Holy Ghost Which dwelleth in them." So loyal, so grateful, so true is the apostle to God as the Revealer. So careful is he to keep the aspect of his soul turned towards the channels of the Revelation. So faithfully does he look to the Church, which is "the pillar and ground of the Truth." So earnestly does he point to the Scriptures as the fount of that knowledge which makes "wise unto salvation." So constantly does he build up the whole purity of Christian morality on the dogmata of the Christian faith. Yes, indeed the knowledge of God grew upon his soul because he set himself to use in their fulness, and completeness, and exactness, and clearness, all the Divine utterances of Truth. He was the unswerving disciple of a master that spake with Authority, and he taught men to observe all things which that Master had commanded.

See how the preciousness of Divine truth, and the duty of receiving it comes out in all that he writes. He warns the Roman Christians to "mark those which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which they have learned, and to avoid them." He tells the Corinthians that the stamp of a faithful ministry is the holding "the word of Truth." He

warns them "not to receive another gospel," "to examine themselves whether they be in the Faith." He reminds the Galatians how firm and unflinching he had been to make sure "that the Truth of the Gospel might continue with them." He blames them for not "obeying the Truth." He presses on the Ephesians that the "one Faith," "the unity of the Faith" is to keep them from being "carried away with every wind of doctrine." He exhorts the Colossians to "continue in the Faith grounded and settled," and to be "stablished in the Faith as they have been taught." "The word of Christ is to dwell in them richly in all wisdom." He praises the Thessalonians because, when they received the word of God which they heard of him, they "received it not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God." Everywhere in his Epistles he impresses on all the supreme importance of receiving into mind and heart the Revelation that has come from God.

Is not this the secret of the growth of knowledge of God, the getting clearly before the soul the things which He has taught? And is not this the very aim of the Church in her creeds, in her sacred canticles, in that round of solemn seasons which runs to its close to-day? Through all these she seeks to make the knowledge of God sink deeper into our hearts. In her Creeds she places us before God as the great

Revealer, and leads us to make our act of Faith, and to declare to God that we receive and believe in a child-like and docile spirit the Truths which God has so lovingly made known to us. And to carry out this purpose she sets the great Truths about God before us in dogmatic form, not in a hazy, misty, undefined fashion, in feeble phrases of vague religious sentiment, but in a clear, well-defined dogma such as the mind can take hold of.

For what are the Dogmata of the Church? "They are, as one has well said, the great Facts of the spiritual world, which are made known to us in the Christian Revelation, embodied in words which express them accurately. What the highest mathematical, and scientific formulæ are to their separate sciences, the records in a brief summary of the long conclusion of a multitude of experiments or problems, these are the Dogmata of our Faith in the realm of Revelation. They are points gained, points of light, illuminating and enlarging all knowledge—gifts to the intellect, like the gift of the sun, and moon, and stars in the heavens, not restrictions upon the action of the intellect, but the gathering up into the mind of new and ever-welling fountains of fresh life and vigour." "They are restrictions only as a Truth gained is a restriction upon error. In real fact, they free us from the bondage of error, and open the way to other

Truths which could never have been reached but from the vantage-ground which each clear definition gives to one who would grow in knowledge. This is the dogmatic teaching of the Church in her Creeds, the mere records of faith in the mighty spirit-world ; not a set of speculations, like the tentative reachings forth of a bold and ambitious philosophy, not a number of refinements, like the subtle mind-play of the metaphysician or the casuist ; not even in themselves appeals to feeling, though the root of all true and deep feeling, but a declaring of God." * True it is that from this declaring of God all else may follow : intellectual advancement, moral obligation, the renewing of the affections, when their truest object is set before them. These are the inevitable consequences of receiving the Truth ; but the object of the Church in defining the Truth is to set God clearly before us. Her Dogmata are like the sharp and clearly defined peaks of the great mountain range, which arrest the eye, which fixe the gaze. Down their sides pour the streams which water the earth, but they themselves tower into an atmosphere high above ours. So are the Creeds of the Church the Record of the Revelation of God.

It is as we use these Creeds morning by morning, and night by night in our prayers at home, as we join

* Bishop Wilberforce, in a sermon on Dogmatic Teaching.

here in Church with the gathered companies of faithful worshippers, who tell forth into the ear of God their glad acceptance of what He has been pleased to teach them, that this knowledge of God grows upon the soul.

Nay, more, as year after year we worship the Incarnate God at Christmas, and are moved to love and wonder at His atoning Death on Good Friday, and rejoice in His mighty Victory over Death at Easter, and exult in the hope of sharing one day the Glory of His Ascension, and recognise His continued Presence with His Church through the descent of the Holy Ghost at Whitsuntide, and adore with deepest awe and reverence, as on this day, the mystery of the Three Persons in the Godhead, which our Lord's own lips have declared to us, the knowledge of God will more and more fill our souls, as it filled the soul of St. Paul. To us, as to him, it will bring a higher joy than any other kind of knowledge can bring. In us, as in him, it will waken up a thirst for a fuller, a more complete knowledge. To us, as to him, the knowledge which we have already as a gift from God will be a pledge that it is the will of God to carry to the highest perfection the Revelations which even here have been so full of joy. And we too, looking on beyond the sorrows and the trials—the toils of mind and the sinkings of heart which fall to our lot now—beyond

our mistakes, our infirmities of faith, our failings, our falls, our sins, and our penitences—shall dare to say : “Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully, even as also I am fully known.”

“Even as also I am fully known.” As we hear these words, a new thought comes breathing out through them. It was not only because he had been so careful to receive the Revelation that came from God that the knowledge of God had grown in the soul of the apostle. No, he had known God personally, something as one friend knows another ; nay, with a knowledge more intimate, more complete than that with which one friend knows another. There had been between him and God the close Communion of the Creature with the Creator, of the redeemed with the Redeemer, of the spirit of man with the indwelling and sanctifying Spirit. “Even as I am fully known :” what do these words tell us of his being known and understood, and borne with in mercy and long-suffering, when in ignorance and unbelief he was doing those “many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” which he “thought” in his blindness he yet “ought to do?” What do they tell us of his being known, when, in the moment of absolute surrender of himself to his Blessed Master, he had said, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”

What do they reveal to us of his learning the Power of the Sacrifice of the Cross to save even him, the chief of sinners! How do they carry us back to toils in which he was always supported,—to sufferings in which One ever cheered him,—to infirmities in which he was even taught to glory,—to loneliness in which he became the more conscious of the presence of One Who was ever near,—to that sense of the blessed assistance of One Who never failed him, which comes out in the triumphant declaration, “I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me,” to that trust in the prevailing Power of Grace that finds expression in the paradox, “When I am weak then am I strong”! Yes, he had been fully known in every crisis of his life, whether there were “fightings without,” or fears within,” in joy and in sorrow, in brightness and in tears, in days of triumph, and in days of weakness and much trembling; and, as he had been fully known, so he had been ever learning more fully to know his Lord. Filled with the sense of the fatherly, redeeming sanctifying Love which he had known in a thousand varying circumstances of life, he looks on to the full, final, unending manifestation of that love, and exclaims, “Now I know in part, then shall I fully know.”

Here surely is our last lesson. There is no knowledge which so grows, which so thrives as the knowledge which the soul gains by living in close

communion with God. Oh, live, move, act, speak, think as in His sacred, loving, penetrating presence, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." Live with souls kept consciously ever open to His influences. Carry to Him in your prayers every study, every aim, every undertaking,—yes, but every sorrow, every temptation, nay, every committed and regretted sin. So learn to know what a Father's Love, a Father's Care, a Father's Guardianship can do for you. Bring to the foot of the Cross all stains that have fallen upon your souls, all the guilt of lost opportunities, and of unloving transgressions, and learn the Power of the Divine Love and of the Divine Sacrifice to cleanse from all sin. In the Power of the Holy Ghost press into an ever closer union with the living Christ till He lives more wholly in you, and you more wholly in Him. Then, then indeed the joy of knowing God will grow more and more upon you. The sacred doctrine of the Trinity—the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—will be no mere abstract Truth to you. It will be a Revelation of a Love personal to yourself, in the light of which you will live. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost" will be to you the blissful realities of your daily life. As more of the tenderness, more of the compassion, more of the watchfulness, more of the mercy, more of

the ever-ready support, more of the holiness, the purity, the perfection of God comes home to you, you will long more for that moment of supreme and perfected happiness in which at last, in the very presence of God, you shall see all that He has been, all that He has done for you in this life,—nay, so far as you are able to bear it—when you shall see all that He is in Himself. And so you too shall take up the apostle's words: "Then shall I know fully, even as also I am fully known."

I am told to remind you that you are asked to aid with your alms to-day Addenbrook's Hospital. The sick and the suffering make this appeal to your pity, to your compassion, to your love. You will not forget that in real love for others is to be found the surest proof that we have a real knowledge of God, Who is love: "Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God."

XI.

LOVE FOR THE FAITHFUL THE CONSEQUENCE
OF FEEDING ON CHRIST.

Preached at St. John the Divine, Kennington. May 27, 1875.

I Corinthians x. 17.

“We being many are one bread, and one body ; for we are all partakers of that one bread.”

IF there is one feeling which is strong in the hearts of all members of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, it must be that of intense love to our Blessed Lord, Jesus Christ. Whatever we may feel as to the depth of the Mystery of the holy Eucharist, and its being beyond the reach of our understanding, one thing at least we know. We know that our Blessed Lord feeds us with Himself in that Blessed Sacrament. He is Himself our food. By feeding on Him our life is kept up within us, that true life by which we live to God. We have our Blessed Lord's own word for this : “ I am the Bread of Life.” “ The Bread which I will give is my Flesh, which I will give

for the life of the world." "Whoso eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him." And "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by me." And, just as our Blessed Lord teaches us in these words that the soul is to draw its life out of Him by feeding upon Him, so the Church teaches us, in the words by which she prepares us for our communion, that we are to thank God not only for giving His Son to die for us, but also for giving Him "to be our spiritual Food and Sustenance in that holy Sacrament." From our childhood we have been taught that, just as our bodies are strengthened by the natural food of bread and wine, so our souls are strengthened and refreshed by the Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the Faithful in the Lord's Supper.

How could we, then, help loving our Blessed Lord? He has so longed to be one with us that he has invented in the blessed Sacrament a way for giving Himself to us.

He knows what we want, the cleansing away of the stains of sin, the changing of our hearts,—a strength above our own,—a power, and force, and principle of life to be put into us. All this we need to undo the harm that has happened to us, through man's falling away from God, and to make our nature what God intended that it should be, to make us able to live

our true life. And all this our blessed Lord offers us in the Blessed Sacrament. Because I live ye "shall live also," is what He says to us, as we draw near. He offers us all the Pardon, and Grace that are to be had through the Merits of His Death, and through the Power of His Life ; for He knows that we want these. But He knows that we want more than these gifts ; that we want Himself, that we were made for Himself, that our hearts are too large to be filled with anything short of Himself. And so He gives Himself to us to be the Bread of Life, to fill, rejoice, gladden, and satisfy our souls.

Nay, He knows far more than our own wants and desires. He knows His Own desires ; and His desire and delight is to be with the sons of men. And so, when we have come with faith, hungering and thirsting for Him, and in penitence banishing and turning out of our hearts whatever might shut Him out, we have possessed ourselves of Him. He has given Himself to us, and we have taken and received Him. We have eaten Him, and fed upon Him, after a heavenly and spiritual manner, but in a manner as true and real as the joys of heaven are true and real. We have had Him for our own ; our own Lord, our own God, our own Life. We have been partakers of that One Bread which came down from heaven to give life to the world.

Again, then, could we help loving Him? The thought of Him, the sense of what He is in Himself, of what He is to us, has grown into us; nay, He Himself has grown into us, and we have grown into Him, His life mingling itself with ours, as the life of the vine runs through all the branches, so that both stock and branches live by one common life. Yes, intense love for our Blessed Lord is the predominant feeling in the heart of every one of us who fulfils the purpose of this Society. Surely this is what makes you wish to give Him the honour due to Him for being present with us in His Sacrament, for being so strangely, mysteriously, lovingly near. This is the reason for aiming at more careful Preparation for your communions, that you may welcome Him. This is what calls for more ardent Thanksgivings, that we may dwell on the Blessedness of His Presence. This is the motive of all outward and inward reverence, that we may treat Him as He ought to be treated, with devout, tender, loyal, reverent love. As the glance of His eye, and the tones of His voice, and the pointed question that searched the heart, and the apt warning that revealed His tender watchfulness, all shewed the apostles of old that they were known, understood, cared for, guarded, and loved individually; and, as by all these marks of their Lord's peculiar and fond interest in them one by one, their hearts were

drawn to, and fixed on Him, till they could say, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" when the falling away of others seemed to make it possible that they too might be drawn off from their Lord, so it has been with us. In our Communion we have seen how He has dealt with us. His special tenderness towards us has come out. And, as life goes on, we feel that He is more to us than all the world beside. Without this Bread the world would starve us. Whence should so many men be satisfied without Him here in the wilderness? On Him alone our hunger has been fed to the full. In Him alone the largest of our longings has been more than satisfied. And so I have taken it for granted that we love Him beyond all else.

II. But there is another love that should spring out of this intense love for Him Who so feeds us. I mean, the love for all who feed on Him together with us. Brethren, if we are one with Him, we are one with each other, in and through him: "We, being many, are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." It was quite as much part of His purpose to draw us to one another as to draw us to Himself; to make us live in, and for one another as for Himself. We are members one of another, as we are members of Him; yes, because we are members of Him. All of us drew life from Him

when "by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." All of us draw life from Him afresh in every Communion. We are actually one bread kneaded into one mass, because partakers of that one bread. You will remember how St. Cyprian says that the very creatures of bread and wine, which are the elements of the holy Communion, that out of which the Sacrament is made, show us that we ought all to be fast joined together in unity. As many grains go to make up one loaf, and many grapes to produce the wine for one cup, so we being many are bound to be one. But why? Because we are actually one body, one Spiritual Mystical Body of Christ, and this because, as we are nourished with our Lord, who is the bread of all of us, one and the same life, His life, passes through all of us, the cleansing powers of the same blood rest on all, the healing influence of the same Divine touch works in all. The multitudes throng Him, and press Him, and virtue goes out of Him to heal every one that has faith to draw it out. The same heavenly might succours all. The same life of God mingles with our individual lives; as one and the same water of the sea flows into all gulfs and bays.

There are natural causes without number for our being drawn together. They are these: we share the same dangers; and weep over the same sorrows;

and smart under the same sufferings ; and have to make way against the same difficulties ; and are beset by the same perplexities ; and experience the same trials ; and are assaulted by the same temptations ; and are engaged in the same keen strife ; and are waging the same fierce battle. Yes, and our souls are comforted with the same consolations ; and our hearts brightened with gleams of the same hopes ; and gladdened with the same successes ; and we are surprised almost out of ourselves by the same unlooked-for victories ; and overcome from time to time by the same unexpected, unimaginable inward peace and joy. We live like children under the eye and care of one Father and God. We are ranged under the protecting Cross of one Lord. We are gathered into the same sacred family. We are bound to receive the same faith. We have pledged ourselves to observe the same laws of the Church of God. All these things are enough, and more than enough, to bind us heart with heart together. But we have an inward bond of supernatural union which goes far beyond these in strength and power, if we would but realise its force. There is actually the same supernatural life at work within us all, intermingling us one with another, and making us dependent one on another : "The whole body, knit together, and compacted by that which every joint

supplieth, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

The uniting Force of God Who is Unity—the Trinity in Unity—is brought to bear upon us that we may be one. God, Who is love, dwells in us, that we may love.

Ah, brethren, are we most moved as the loveliness of this truth shines out before us ; or abashed at its high and mysterious majesty, or ashamed and confounded as we feel how we have resisted those mighty forces that have been put forth upon us ?

Is this intense love for one another felt among us ? Love makes of the many one. " We being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." Can we, may we, dare we say this of ourselves ? Not only are there no jealousies, suspicions, unkindnesses amongst us, but we are one, one in the strength of love that makes all hearts beat together, one in the embrace of an affection that encircles all whom God loves, one in the light of a tenderness that throws its one glow of beauty on all that comes across it, one in the pulses of a common life that are stirred by a sense of true brotherhood on all sides—one in heart and soul.

Ah, it was so at Pentecost : " The multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul ; neither said any of them that aught of the things

which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." They were many then, as we are many now. There were amongst them what might have been conflicting interests. There were different ranks, and classes, and positions, and endowments. There met together in that charmed circle of unity the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, those who were advanced in religious knowledge, and those who were beginners, the governors and the governed. As the natural man might judge, there were all things that might have kept them apart. What welded them together? Or, rather, what fused them into one golden mass of burning, glowing love? Doubtless it was the fire of the Holy Ghost which fell into them from heaven as they were baptized into the one body of our Lord. But what kept up in them the uniting forces of this Divine life? Was it not the power of the one Bread of which they were partakers, the transforming power of that force which turned man's selfishness into a likeness of the all-embracing love of God? At least we read that it was they who "continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread" who also continued in that sacred closeness of fellowship with the apostolic band that made them feel that all things were common to them, alike outward possessions, and inward hopes, and joys, and blessings, and gifts from heaven.

Again, then, is this so now? One's heart aches as one puts the question. One's head is ready to droop and one's cheek to blush for very shame. How are our days marked by divisions, separations, or misunderstandings! Divisions even gloried in; separations stoutly maintained; misunderstandings scarcely even sought to be removed.

Rich and poor seem to dwell even more and more widely apart; to come less and less into contact with each other in the kindly intercourse of life; to dwell almost in separate spheres.

Schools and parties in the Church seem too often bent on exaggerating their differences; to look fixedly on the points on which they are out of harmony with each other, instead of considering the vast body of truths in which they are thoroughly at one; nay, to overlook the fact that in their very manner of stating the truths which they cherish they often make them seem to conflict with other truths, equally taught by God, and therefore in thorough harmony with the rest of the body of revealed truths. If men were but determined to understand one another, how many needless separations might disappear! The steady burning of the sun of Christian charity would disperse a whole cloud of the mists of prejudice.

And there are other instances where the love that

should spring from a deep sense of the blessed union in which all Christians should live has been most sadly enfeebled. Only think of the reverent, filial, tender love which we ought to feel towards every Bishop, the love excited in us by the very title which each Bishop bears, of a Father in God, his greatest noblest, tenderest title, so far beyond all other titles which we give him, in its appeal to our hearts. Only think of the love, and tenderness, and sympathy, the warmth of interest in all that concerns the spiritual life of their children, which these our Fathers in God should feel for us, for every single child of God and of the Church. Imagine the sympathy, the interest that should be felt, and shown, and acted upon by every single communicant in all who partake of the One Bread of life. Or think for yourselves what should be the feeling of those who kneel side by side in the same church, who are fed almost at the same minute at the same altar by the same Lord. And, then, think what is the actual love felt in all these cases. God forbid that we should say that there is no love, that there is not even great love between Bishop and People, between one congregation and another, between the communicants at the same altar, aye, even great and growing love, with increasing forbearance and mutual consideration between those who are of different ways of thinking in the Church.

Least of all, God forbid that I should seem to imply that you, dear brethen, have been unkindly or unloving towards others! But is there the love that there should be amongst us? Surely we shall not say this while we remember what a love our Lord must look for, when He gives Himself to be the source of love within us by making us partakers of Himself, the One Bread. Oh, let us think deeply of this. Our love is to be like His own, broad, tender, gentle, forgiving, healing, soothing, blessing all around. And here, then, is a noble work set before us, to remove all barriers that keep heart from heart. Let us, then, aim at this.

1. Keep up in your minds the sense of inward communion with others. Realise this. Love, respect, honour the life of Christ in others.

2. Pray for the power to understand others better; for deeper, true, heartier sympathy with them.

3. Extend the range of your intercessions.

4. Cultivate the spirit of fellowship by acts of loving-kindness. Take your part in the sorrows and joys of others. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

5. Put the best possible construction on the acts and words of others.

6. Avoid on your own part what is likely to be misunderstood.

7. If you have to speak on matters of faith, recommend the truth by stating it in the form likeliest to ensure its reception.

8. If you have to deal with those who are in error, look for the truth that underlies this error.

9. Avoid, on your own part, the error who springs from exaggeration of the truth.

10. Most of all, honour the life of Jesus Christ within yourself. His was a life of unbounded love, of tenderness, forbearance, long-suffering, gentleness. It was a life that drew others together, that gathered together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. It was the life of One Who was firm, uncompromising, Who had a single eye to God and His truth, but who was never harsh, nor aggravating. It was the life of One Who, under the sins, and faults, and shortcomings of men, was quick and eager to see the wish to be nearer to God. So let your life be. As you feed upon Christ, let the character of His life and His love for others come out in you. How great a thought is that of a living French bishop,* that, if our communions be true, we shall in our measure become a Bread of life to others! We may, he says, receive Christ at the holy table, and then become ourselves an Eucharistic table to those around us. We may make our friends

* Monseigneur Landriot, "La Sainte Communion."

sit down at the banquet of our heart, our words, our acts, and so help to transform them little by little into Christ. If only He be in us, each one that comes near us will be soothed, comforted, brightened, ~~aided~~, cheered. The very sweetness of our love will draw our friends to Him from Whom we gathered the power of loving into our own souls. And they will be made to hunger after Him, Who alone can fill our souls, till they find their joys where we have found ours.

XII.

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT THE SAFEGUARD OF
THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

Preached at St. Peter's, London Docks. May 30, 1872.

St. Luke xxii. 19.

“ This do in remembrance of Me.”

AT the celebration of the holy Eucharist one Name, one Person, is in the hearts and minds of all of us. Our worship is full of Him. It becomes more full of Him still as this sacred service mounts to its height. Our sense and feeling of His Presence grows more intense as the reality of that Presence is brought home to us, and presented to us in its distinctness. As, when our Blessed Lord made Mary Magdalene feel and know that He was really present with her, she poured out her whole heart in the burning fervour of that acknowledgment, “ Rabboni,” my master, my Lord, my All, so by our every act and word we try

to express to the Blessed Jesus what He is to us. Our whole soul fastens on Him. Our spirit has no eye for any one, or anything else. Our gaze is fixed on Him. He is with us, and we are with Him. We know what He is in Himself, how pure, how fair, how holy, how perfect. We know what He has been to us, how loving, how tender, how compassionate, how full of healing, and pardon, and peace. And so every hymn is full of His praises ; and every gesture is an act of loving reverence to Him ; and every sacred rite speaks of Him. We are in His court, and under His eye, and there is an interchange of love between Him and us. On our side there is the love of reverence. On His side there is the love of a gentle, fostering, soothing protection.

Now, why is this ? It is just possible that this might not be the case with every one here. There might be some one here who does not understand what our Blessed Lord is to the soul. Why is He all in all to us ?

There is, I think, but one answer. We have obeyed Him in a faithful use of the Sacrament of love, the holy Eucharist, and so love for Him has become the ruling passion of our hearts. He has said to us, "This do in remembrance of me," and we have acted on His words, we have celebrated the Sacrament which is the memorial of Him. And what has

followed? His whole life has been lived, as it were, again and again before us, or rather He Himself personally has lived before us, with us, as though He were our companion, and we were His. His words, His acts, His sufferings have sunk into our minds, and won and attracted us, and fixed our whole affections upon Him as upon one whom the heart must love beyond all others. Every remembrance of Him in each earnest communion has made us more conscious of what He really is, and we have become wrapped up in Him.

But there is no need to tell you that the blessed Sacrament has done far more for us than this. It is a memorial not only of His Perfections, but of His Death for us. It has brought out to us how dear we are to Him Who gave His very self for us. It has comforted us with the hope of all the pardon that is to be had even for us sinners through His Precious Blood. It has shown us what we owe to Him, and so has bound us to Him Who endured the Cross for us.

But, again, while I say this, you are quick to feel that I have understated the truth. "This do in remembrance of Me,"—what do those words mean? If they only mean that the holy Eucharist was to be a memorial of our Blessed Lord to us, we could see at once how much the soul would gain from the Institution

of the holy Eucharist. What a thing it is in this world of sin and imperfection, in the midst of earthliness, and selfishness, and pollution, to be brought face to face with that pure, spotless, noble, perfect life, and to be drawn out of, and above, ourselves by such an example! What a thing it is when our hearts condemn us for our sins, and we are ready to lose all hope; as we feel what we have been, and what we are, to be led, as it were, in memory to the foot of that Cross, and to know that there is a fountain which has been opened to cleanse even such uncleanness as ours! What hope and energy this gives to repentance! But you know that the holy Eucharist is not only a Memorial to us; it is a Memorial also to God. "Do this in remembrance of Me," make the appointed offering of Me, lay before the eye of My Father the Memorial of Me. Plead before him all that I am, all that I have done, all that I have suffered. So that in the holy Eucharist the whole person and character of our Blessed Lord is presented to God. That perfect life of Him in Whom the Father was well pleased lives on with the glory and beauty of every smile and tear, every glance and look, every thought and imagination, every word and discourse, every act of obedience, every willing, patient, trustful suffering. That precious death and passion, in all its power to atone, is not

renewed and repeated in any bloody suffering. That could not be, that cannot be again. Yet in very deed and truth that Death of the Cross is pleaded before God with all its prevailing force to draw down pardon and blessing.

This is how we have come to be wrapped up so much in our Blessed Lord. The Celebration again and again of the Blessed Sacrament has made His fairness, and beauty, and perfection, His love and Tenderness to ourselves sink more and more into our souls. Adoring love for Him has grown as we learnt more truly Who and What He is. And then, again, as in each Celebration we have pleaded his Sacrifice before God, we have seen more and more what gifts for the soul come through Him, and how our every hope hangs on Him, and so we have held to Him with the faith and devotion of the whole heart. And this, too, accounts for the existence of our Confraternity. We must long to honour Him in His Blessed Sacrament Who has so blessed us. We cannot but use every effort to increase Celebrations of that Sacrament when we know what its power is to our own selves. And, as a matter of course, we must aim at making those Celebrations reverent, both that we may honour our Lord ourselves, and lead others to honour Him.

But now there is one objection which may be made to our Society. It may be said that its aim is

narrowed to too small a point. If you love Him, it may be said, form yourselves into a Society with a larger sphere for work. In the very name and objects of your Society there is a danger of fixing the mind on something short of our Blessed Lord Himself, or losing in reverence for an ordinance, however sacred that ordinance may be, the thought of Him Whom that ordinance was meant to place as a living person before the soul. Probably you do see this danger yourselves. Certainly it has been most carefully guarded against in the statement of the first "object" of the Confraternity, "the honour due to the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ in the blessed Sacrament of His body and blood." But is our object a small one? If our aim is narrowed to a single point, is not that single point the very centre from which the whole series of Christian truths radiate?

Is there any one here who loves our Blessed Lord with his whole heart? Is there any one who does not so love Him, or at least desire to love Him? I speak to those whom He has fed with His Body and Blood; in whom He dwells, who dwell in Him. Brethren, of you it has been said by Himself, "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." His Life is in you. You live by His life more than by your own. If it can be said, even of men who have only

natural life in them, that yet they "live, and move, and have their being" in God, Who sustains them, how much more is this true of those who have received His own life into them! His life circulates, as it were, through you, and with His life must come love for what He loves, pity for those whom He pities, joy in what is a joy to Him. He has identified you with Himself. Well, then, His interests are yours, as yours are certainly His. His cause is your cause; His victories your victories; His honour your honour. You would long to do some work for Him, to strike a blow for Him, to defend what is dear to Him, to promote what He has at heart. You have had wishes, longings, desires to do something for Him, at least some little thing before you die, for Him Who lived and died for you.

Well, now, how is the cause of our Blessed Lord most imperilled at this time? Is it not by indifference to the truth which He taught? Is it not by men's thinking that it matters not what they believe? One who is in heart and soul loyal to our Blessed Lord could hardly ask for a greater favour than to be allowed to do something towards preserving in their fulness and exactness the truths which He taught Himself on earth.

See, now, whether every one of these truths, every article of the faith, do not range itself around the

Blessed Sacrament. See whether a right faith concerning the Blessed Sacrament is not a safeguard against every form of error into which men are being led around us. There is no time to go into this in detail. But let us test the matter in this way.

Is there any one here who has any doubt as to the personal existence of his own soul, of himself, or of the immortality of that soul?

Have we any doubts about the existence of God? The world is full of such doubts, or of the profession of such doubts. It puts forth as the proof of its intellectual power that it knows nothing of its own existence, or of the existence of any other being. Are we in this state?

Have we any doubt that our Blessed Lord is really God and really man, that He did actually die for our sins, and rise again, or that He is in heaven our Advocate, or that He will come again to judge us? Do we doubt the existence or the work of God the Holy Ghost? Have we any doubt that there is such a body as the Catholic Church, or that our salvation depends on being members of it? Are we uncertain as to whether the Saints have communion with each other or whether there is such a thing as sin, or whether it can be forgiven, or how it can be forgiven? Do we debate whether the body will rise again, or whether we shall live for ever hereafter?

Do I affirm too much when I say that one devout communion, with a right faith in the Blessed Sacrament, is an act directly contradictory of all such doubts?

In such a communion the soul, conscious of its own existence, comes into direct communion with God. Yes, but how? Not through its own act, or its own powers alone, but through the mediation of our Blessed Lord. It acknowledges Him as God and man. As St. Ignatius says, it confesses a true Eucharist in His flesh. It depends on His passion for pardon. It seeks fresh life from its risen Lord. It seeks for His intercession. It looks to be prepared for His coming again. It acknowledges that sacramental union is wrought through the Holy Ghost. It desires to maintain its union with the Church as the body of our Lord—as St. Augustine says, to become that body on which it feeds. It knows that a real communication between saints living and departed is effected through communion with our Lord. It comes for the freeing from its sins. It claims our Lord's promise of resurrection and of eternal life through Him.

See whether this be not so. Analyse, if you will, the working of your own minds in communion, and see what is their firm acceptance of all these truths. See how readily all sceptical doubts fall off from the mind of the communicant. He has made proof of the reality of what sceptics discuss. To him doubt

seems to have become a blessed impossibility. And when men tempt him to turn to this or that so-called philosophical system, He turns, like St. Peter, with a calm certainty to our Blessed Lord, and says : "Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that Thou camest forth from God."

Ah, but there is yet another way in which faith in the blessed Sacrament guards the soul against error. Would to God that men would see it ! The holy Eucharist might then indeed be in very truth the Sacrament of love, and minds that have been too long and too sadly parted might find their bond of union in the use of it.

There are those who value highly—they cannot value too highly—the doctrine of the Atonement, of our Blessed Lord's priesthood, of the justification, of the soul through faith, of the need of grace—in one word, of salvation through Christ. Where and how are these great truths worked into the soul ? In the receiving of the Blessed Sacrament. How have you and I learnt that our Blessed Lord is all in all to us, that from without, not from within us must come the change which is absolutely necessary for our simple nature, that His Sacrifice alone can cleanse us, that He is our only Priest, that the soul must take hold of Him, and deal personally with Him and He with it ?

We have had these truths more and more worked into souls by every communion. And who are they that have learnt to doubt all these truths? Those that have been taught to look to the working of their own minds, to their own faith, to something within themselves for salvation.

In a word, in the blessed Sacrament there is a meeting between God and the soul, and the soul is taught to find its satisfaction in God. It is taught to look out of itself, beyond itself for all that can change, and bless, and exalt, and ennoble it, and give it happiness. It is not taught to depend upon its own feelings, its earnestness of faith, its power of hope, its strength of love, or even its utter abnegation of self. It is not left to imagine that it can raise itself from its fallen state, and effect its own union with God. No, it is presented as in a state of hunger in this mysterious feast, craving for God, longing for the powers that are in God to be exercised upon it, and depending upon God's own act to unite Himself to the soul. And the soul knows that this union is possible, that it can be made one with God through God the Son having been made man, and having died, and risen, through the working of His life in itself. The faith of the communicant may be expressed in one single sentence, "Christ in me, the hope of glory,"—I come to feed on my

Blessed Lord in His Own Sacrament, I receive Him, Who is both God and man, and with Him all His merits are applied to me, and my sin forgiven through His passion, and His Own risen life mingles with mine, and in Him I am united to God and to all that is in God, and the weakness and corruption into which I fell by separation from God is overcome, and I pass on to the glory of everlasting life in God. Here, again, is the whole Creed brought into action. And here, again, is the whole principle of the Fall, the wilful eating of the forbidden food, by which the soul of the first man tore itself out of the hand of God, counter-worked by the adoring feeding of man on God, Who gives Himself to satisfy the soul.

We may well think of this to-day. Great as is the joy of our communions to ourselves, they may yet also be a joy to our Lord. Wonderful as is the work that is done in us through them, they yet also do a work for Him, His Cause, His Truth, His Person. They preserve, they evidence, they bring into action, they proclaim before men all the circle of truths which He taught.

Dear brethren, you will rejoice in this. While faith seems to fail in so many round us, and doubts and perplexities abound, it is no little thing to have been drawn together by God into a society which may

do its little towards preserving those truths which alone can save a poor, blind, wandering, fallen world. But see that you do not miss your part in this joy. Prolong your communions into your lives. Clear as is the witness that is borne for each article of the faith by a devout act of communion, clearer still is the witness of a transformed life, the life of one who has passed into union with God.

Would you witness for the existence of your own souls? Live like those who would not throw away by act or word of sin, by frivolity or carelessness, those souls, and their undying interests.

Would you witness for God? Live as if your communion with Him was unbroken. Live, act, speak, behave, ah, even move as if you were entranced by Him, living in Him, He living in you. By a whisper, by a smile, by an imagination we may confess God. By a sneer, by a mere look of apathy or of disgust, by a scornful laugh we may deny Him.

Would you witness for an incarnate God? Be yourselves His living witnesses. Let men then see that the life that you now live in the flesh you live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved you and gave Himself for you, nay, that not you live, but He liveth in you. Let them say, the life of these men passes the power of men. It is supernatural, it is heavenly, it is Divine. Fresh from the memory of His death, die

with your Lord to what your Lord hates. Fresh from taking part in His sacrifice, sacrifice your pleasures, your time, your money, your inclinations, your lives, your duties. Spring with Him from the grave of corruption, of sloth, of worldliness. Ascend with Him till your every aim is at the things which are above.

Breathe His spirit of love, tenderness, patience, consideration for others, gentleness, and purity.

Make men to pant for everlasting life by the winning loveliness of your own heavenly lives on earth. Let them not shrink from heaven as they see the dull, dreary emptiness, and unlovingness of those who talk of heaven.

Ah, do this. Do it in remembrance of Him who makes Himself your food that in the marvel of His Blessed Sacrament He may reproduce Himself in you, and display still before the eyes of man at least some gleams of that fair life of His which made Him grow "in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

XIII.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF WORKING WITH GOD
FOR HIS CHURCH.

Preached at St. Michael's, Shoreditch. June 22, 1870.

Acts iv. 29, 30.

“And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy Word, by stretching forth Thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy Holy Child Jesus.”

WE are met together to ask God's pardon for all the sins, mistakes, and shortcomings of ourselves, and of the other members of our Society in doing the work of the Church Union. We have to beg His forgiveness for what we have left undone, for what we have done amiss, and for any failings as to the spirit in which our work has been done.

We are met also to thank God for letting us do any work at all for Him, for His honour and glory, and for His holy Church, which is so dear to Him. And

we are met to beg Him to guide and strengthen us to do whatever fresh work He may put into our hands for the coming year.

This has probably put a new meaning into the Kyrie which has followed each Commandment this morning, and it will add intenseness to our use of the Prayer for the Church Militant, the words of which embrace, and express so wonderfully, all the wants of the Church of God.

But, more than this, the thought of the purpose for which we are met together will ally us in heart and soul with the Church of God in all ages. It will place us at once amongst the company of the first believers, of whom the text speaks, and show us that we have one common cause with them, one aim and object ; that we are surrounded with the same difficulties ; that we are beset by the same enemies ; that we are called and bound over to the same sufferings ; that we should be animated by the same spirit ; that we have the same refuge to flee to ; that we are working for the same Master ; and can make an appeal to the same Lord.

Fresh from the threats of the council of the Jews, and from the new hindrances that had sprung up round their work, St. Peter and St. John go to their own company, to those who were banded together with them in the cause of our Blessed Lord. They make

their report. They confide to one another their dangers and their difficulties. At once, with one heart, with one voice, they turn to Him, for Whom and with Whom they are working. They commit themselves, their work, their aims to Him. It is the meeting of a Church Union in the presence of the Church's Lord.

Is the scene changed? Is the time changed? Is the work changed? Are the dangers and difficulties changed? Is the hope and strength of the faithful changed? Rather time and space are annihilated to the eye of faith this morning, and we are still in that company, and still surrounded with the same dangers, and still doing the same acts of faith, and still banded in the same union, and still appealing to the same Lord, and still sure of the same aid.

It is easy enough to see and to trace the similarity in the sufferings and difficulties of the Church at all periods. But now let us go one step further and ask why it is that constant struggle and constant difficulty besets the Church. It is simply because of her Divine character that she is so beset. We are sometimes tempted to think that, because our Blessed Lord has pledged His presence to His Church, therefore she is to be free from sufferings, from humiliations, from perils. Her course is to be nothing but a course of glory, and power, and open, manifest success. She is to be recognised every-

where, understood everywhere, welcomed everywhere. Or at the least, if she is not to have this brilliant success immediately, it will come after a year or two more of difficulty. We almost expect to live and see it. Could this be? Was it so with her Divine Head? Was He not despised and rejected of men? If now and then the signs of His glory and power compelled men to recognise Him, or to suspect His greatness, or attracted them to Him, were there not the strangest alternations of humiliation and majesty, of weakness and power in His life? And is not the same thing to be traced in the history of His Church? So much is this so, that men have thought that His whole course in the world, from His birth to His resurrection, has been, or is being, reproduced in the history of His mystical body. And this really must be so. The Church is the kingdom of heaven. In her the powers of heaven are brought to bear on this fallen world; the light of heaven to lighten this world's darkness; the purity of heaven to deliver from this world's sin; the peace of heaven to relieve this world's misery. Say, rather, the King or Lord of heaven has stooped to comfort, redeem, aid, sanctify His Own creation through the Church. And so it is said of those who are brought into the Church that they are "translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son." There are, then, personal powers of good in

conflict with personal powers of evil, Our Lord and His Church in conflict with Satan and the world. And so there is an unceasing strife being waged.

And, if this be so, what should we expect? Why, that every success of the Church would be followed by some new form of trial or of attack made upon her. By every victory won the Church invades the territories of the Evil One, plants an outpost in them and impinges upon the kingdom of darkness, and so arouses the powers of evil to contend with greater force and malice against the powers that are of God.

This is exactly what we see in the history of the Church at Pentecost. The Holy Ghost comes down upon the Church, and fills her with His divine life and power. He gives proofs of His Divine presence. By the gift of tongues, by the force, fire, and energy of the apostles, by their boldness and fervent zeal thousands are joined to the Church. The strange moving of men's hearts shows that God is working through the Church. Even outward signs of His presence are given in the miraculous healing of the lame man. These signs of God's presence were given, doubtless, both to draw unbelievers to the Church, and to give boldness and trust to those who had to be leaders in the Church's work : just as Bishop Taylor says that the first beginnings of repentance are often sweetened with comforts and evident tokens of the favour of God.

But as with the individual, so with the Church, after the time of joy and triumph comes the time of suffering. The Sadducees, the easy religionists of the day, the calm, philosophic party, who were especially opposed to all extravagancies, who felt, we may suppose, keenly that this new form of religion, which claimed supernatural powers, brought the unseen world into such strange connection with the visible world, these men rose against the Apostles. They were moved (can we doubt who moved them, who used them?), they were moved to grapple with this new zeal, with this troublesome form of earnestness, to stifle it in its infancy. It was already becoming popular. No time must be lost. The fire of the new enthusiasm was catching. It must be quenched.

The leading Apostles were seized. They were imprisoned. They were called up before the religious Court of the day. Who were these unlearned and ignorant men, these unenlightened fanatics, who were interfering with the established religion, and disturbing the peace of the country? Such a thing was not to be endured. It must be put down. The Apostles were set in the midst. They were asked what right they had to act in this way. "By what power or by what name have ye done this?"

There they stand. You feel, you feel, dear brethren, what an unequal contest it is. Why, all the powers

of heaven, the powers of God are on the Apostles' side. What issue could there be but one? Yes; but throw yourselves into the Apostles' state of mind. They had taken up our blessed Lord's work, they had been baptized with His spirit, they had felt His powers working in them, they were speaking His message, they were telling a poor, lost world of the way in which to reach through that Lord a light, and peace, and joy, a deliverance, and a happiness for which that world had been feeling in vain. They had unfolded those glories to which every rite and ceremony, every prophecy or revelation of the Jewish Church had been leading men up. To them it must have seemed as if all hearts ought to catch and welcome the truth at once, most of all, the hearts of the professed religious leaders of their country. And here they are misunderstood, misrepresented, opposed, hindered, threatened, and this by those religious leaders themselves. The very laws of religion are to be turned against them. What? Has their Lord forsaken them already? No. Their hour of need is His hour of help. Only when the world's power rears itself against Him, could they learn what His power is. "Filled with the Holy Ghost," Peter boldly and firmly tells his judges that it is through our Blessed Lord that the lame man has been healed, and through Him alone that salvation is to be had.

His very judges marvel. They seem to feel a supernatural presence about them in spite of their determination not to acknowledge it. They cannot deny the miracle that has been worked. They dare not proceed to greater lengths in their persecution. Something holds them back; they know not what; they know not who. Nay, even public opinion is too much for them. They would be ready to punish, perhaps to get rid of, these enthusiasts who will believe more than themselves. But they must tolerate them. And the most that they can do is to call them, and threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

Alas! for them, a new chance has been offered them only to be thrown away. They have seen the signs of our Lord's power. They have listened to His messages. They have almost felt His presence. And they have rejected Him. We will turn sadly from them.

But the Apostles too have had a revelation. They also have felt our Lord's nearness. And they at least have learnt more than one lesson for themselves, and for the Church in all times. They have seen how they are identified with our Lord. It is not enough to say that their case is like His, their sorrows like His, their weakness and their shame like His. It is verily and indeed His cause, not theirs, which is being

tried before the world. They do not belong to themselves, but to Him. By the strange baptism of fire, when the Holy Ghost came upon them, He melted them, as it were, into Himself. He wrought and welded them into the Church, which is His mystical body. They have been taken up out of the mere natural order of men in the flesh, and lifted into the supernatural order of men who have been born again through the Spirit. They are one with God. God works in them, through them, by them, and uses them to do His work in the world. They are fellow labourers with God. And, if this is full of blessedness, it is full of awe. It must be that the forces of Hell must move up against them. All instruments that Satan can use against the kingdom of light and peace will be used against them ; attacks of men, misrepresentations of men, lies of men, persecutions of men, all these were used against their Master, and they are one with their Master. Peace and unbroken success, and the world's praise and ease in their work are not things to be looked for by them. They are bound over to conflict and strife. And so they express this in their prayer ; " Being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, Thou art God,

Which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is ; Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things ? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against Thy Holy Child Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy word." So they unite themselves with their Lord. They feel that they have but one cause with Him. Their work is a prolongation of His. The very same band of unseen, vigilant, persevering enemies beset them. And as in His case, so in theirs, these enemies can go just as far and no further than the purpose of God will allow. Therefore they appeal to God. They invite Him to see what was being done against Himself. They are prepared for onslaught, for hindrances, for opposition, for attack. They are not surprised, nor cast down, nor impatient and fretful because of opposition. They are calm bold, and determined. They do not doubt their Master's presence because the powers of evil are aroused

against them. They would doubt His presence if all was smooth and easy round them. The waters rage, and swell, and foam in their madness round them just because the rock of God's truth is planted in the midst of the waves.

But there is another proof of their sense of the Divine and supernatural character of their work quite as remarkable as their calm expectation of difficulty and opposition. There is no vindictiveness against their opponents—against their fellow-men who are opposing them. This was not always so. We know that St. James and St. John were once so touched to the quick by the opposition to their Master that they would have called down fire from heaven on their adversaries and His. There is no sign of such unchastened indignation here. The disciples are as full of the Divine pity as of the Divine calm. And why? Is it not that they feel that the battle is not with their fellow-men,—not with those who are weak and blind, and ready to go wrong as themselves, but with the powers of evil, who are using men, directing, urging them on, moving them as on a great chess-board of the world. And so the disciples pity those who are raging against them. They feel for their delusions. They beg that the healing powers of Him Who went about doing good may be put forth that men may be won to the truth, to the Lord, to the Church, by seeing

what ministries of mercy go forth from the Church. They had caught the compassion of their Lord for those who were oppressed of the Devil.

And what followed on this? New spiritual powers were given to those who had so faithfully used the powers which had been bestowed before. Again "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word with boldness." They were knit together even in a firmer unity, for then it was that we read that "the multitudes of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul"; and a tender love towards each other showed itself in their sharing all that they had together. Never was such a Church Union. The common danger to the common cause and work of their Lord was the highest of all blessings. It cemented this union. As sheep press together when the wolf attacks them, they drew closer to each other as the world threatened to hem them in. Their faith in the mighty presence among them was quickened; their conception of the character of the work was raised. They cast themselves on Him on whom the attack was made. They found His strength made perfect in their weakness. With great power they gave witness to His resurrection, and great grace was upon them all.

Brethren, this is not a case for applying Holy Scripture. It is said that history is always repeating

itself. At least this is true of the history of the Church. For the work, the powers, the office of the Church are unchanging. She is still, as ever, the mystical body of our Lord. St. Paul does not shrink from calling her by the name of her Lord and Head; and, as the Prince of the World has always treated the Church, so he treats her still. He at least is not changed, nor worn out, nor is his hatred diminished. And therefore still he raises hindrances and difficulties, and wakens up persecutions against the Church of God. They shift and change with a world which shifts and changes. The plans of operations differ. The spirit of opposition is the same. Again and again, as we have been sketching the history of the assault on the Apostles, it has almost read like a tale of our own days. Just as the Apostles were weaned from their dreams that our Blessed Lord's kingdom was to be one of earthly power, and force, and splendour, and were taught its spiritual character, so, as more and more of temporal support has been withdrawn from the Church, we have learnt that the real power, and might, and glory of the Church lie in her being the body of our Lord. Faith in the presence of our Blessed Lord, and in the power of that presence has grown into our hearts and minds. Numbers have been attracted by these truths. The supernatural character of the Church has been felt

and realised, and, as the members of the Church have become more earnest, the kingdom of heaven has asserted itself. It has claimed to be God's instrument, to speak for God, to act for God, to be the channel for God's graces to the world. What must follow? The opposition of those powers of evil that underlie the powers of the world. Just as it was with the Apostles, so it must have been, so it has been with us. Strife and struggle, scorn and mockery, misrepresentation and false accusation, threats and opposition were sure to come. They have come. But what have we done? Some have been surprised and disheartened. Some have grown fretful and impatient. Some have lost hope and faith. They have begun with dreams and ideals of a Church free from trial and difficulty, such as the world never has seen and never will see. They have pondered on the mighty gifts which are promised to the Church, but left out of their calculations the forces that are opposed to her. As troubles thickened on all sides, they have asked whether God could be with a spiritual body, so thwarted, so hindered, so obstructed, instead of remembering that conflict is the seal of the presence of the kingdom of heaven; that the King Himself said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Brethren, let us wake up from these dreams, and be

content to learn what the Apostles learnt, and to learn as they learnt. The stress of the conflict is only a proof of the greatness of our cause. The eagerness of the hosts that would rob us proves all the more the riches of the Church's treasury of truth, of grace, of sanctity. Let us make sure indeed that it is the real truth which came from our Lord that we are defending, that it is His work that we are doing. Let us have a watchful fear of following our own fancies, of indulging our own tastes, of teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. But, when we have made sure of this, in the midst of all opposition, let us calmly make our appeal where the Apostles made theirs. There is one Court of final appeal to which all causes are safely referred, in which there are no errors, and no possibility of injustice. It is that Court to which the Apostles appealed from the errors of men, and to whose decision they so calmly left their cause, "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings."

Only, while we calmly make that appeal, let us not appeal against men, but for men, against the powers of evil that oppress them. Men are not our opponents. They may be used, marshalled, misled, stirred up to oppose God, His Church, and His truth. But the real attack is planned and laid by the inveterate, undying enemy of our Lord. Let us pity those who are misled and deluded by him.

The Apostles prayed that miracles of healing might be worked to convince a suffering world that the Healer of all its sorrows dwelt in the Church. Let us pray that miracles of grace may teach men what powers of healing for every suffering of the soul are brought by our Lord to bear on the world through His Church.

Surely such union with our Blessed Lord as this—the union of determination to be on His side, even to the endurance of suffering and scorn; the union of a jealous regard for His truth in its exactness, and His Church in its integrity; the union of hearts that distrust themselves, but leave all to Him; the union of our weakness with His might; the union with Him in compassion for a poor, erring world—would bring on us new gifts as it brought new gifts on the Apostles. New difficulties and new dangers would be only opportunities for new boldness and new successes. New attacks from without would only band us more closely together within. The majesty, the vastness of the Church cause would grow upon us as we realized Whose cause it was. As we felt ourselves to be gathered round our Lord, and were all bent on one object, the doing of His work, and all sworn to one allegiance, allegiance to His honour in the minutest particularities of the Creed that came from Him, in the purest worship that could be offered to Him, in the

submission of our souls to the law and discipline of the Church as His kingdom, the firmest of all Church unions would be formed. As we spoke the truth in love, we should "grow up into Him in all things Who is Head, even Christ; from Whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

XIV.

CHRIST OUR FOOD IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

Preached at St. Barnabas, Pimlico. May 27, 1869.

St. John vi. 57.

“As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father ;
so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.”

THESE words show us the wonders that are worked by our Blessed Lord in the souls of those who receive Him in the blessed Sacrament. It would perhaps be more true to say that they give us a glimpse of those wonders. No mind of man could take them in in all their fulness. It needs the mind of God Himself to understand them to the uttermost. For see what is wrapped up in these words of the text. They speak of the life of God, the life that is in God Himself, the life that is the source and origin of all life, the very fountain of all energy, and power, and being. And then they tell us how this life which is in God, or the life which God is, can pass into those whom God has

made, how the Creator's life may be given to the creature, so that the creature may live by God, and through God, and in God, or, perhaps to state it more marvellously, how God may live in the creature: "With Thee is the well of life,"—and in Thee "we live, and move, and have our being." Have I not said enough, more than enough, in saying this, to send you back to your last communion pondering, adoring, moved to speechless and unutterable thankfulness; or to lead you on to your next communion full of awe, yet full of longing—full of awe as you think what He is whom you invite to visit you, what you are to whom He comes—full of longing as you think what He can do in you?

I might well ask to be allowed to say no more. There must be many a priest here who has given our Blessed Lord's Body and Blood to others, and then felt at times a kind of awe and reverence even for the persons of those who have just received their Lord and been made one with Him. Think, then, what I must feel towards you. Each one of you has, I take it for granted, received our Blessed Lord to-day. You are fresh from communion with Him. You have opened out your hearts to Him, and He has entered in to dwell in you. He has spoken Spirit to spirit with you; for to hold communion with Him is nothing less than this; indeed, it is far, far more.

St. Chrysostom, in speaking of the meaning of that word "Communion" (*Koinwvlá*), says that it is far more than "Communication," that it means our Blessed Lord taking to Himself all that belongs to us, and giving to us all that belongs to Him. He has held this morning this closeness of communion with you ; and now, if I speak, I seem to be interfering with His voice, and interrupting the whispers of His Own inward teaching. For this reason I have shrunk, I do shrink now, from speaking to you.

And, besides this, it seems to be an impertinence for me especially to speak to you, some of whom at least are theologians, at whose feet I ought to be sitting. And, again, it is an impertinence, because, whatever some may say, the Church does speak so plainly, simply, fully about the Blessed Sacrament, especially in her Catechism, to those who take plain words in the Church's own plain meaning, that there is no need to look beyond them for the truth.

All that remains for me to do, then, is to ask you to think of what our Blessed Lord says.

I. He tells us that one common life is in His Father and in Himself: "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father." What is this life? May He forgive me, if I presume too far in trying to say what it is ! It is all the full force, power, and energy which is in God. And yet, at the same time, it is the

peace, calm, and bliss in which He exists. The life of God is purity, and holiness, and perfection. It is wisdom, knowledge, and light. It is love, working, blessing, enriching others ; love, enjoying the effects of its own works in others, rejoicing in the joy which it has given to others power to taste. All this is in God, as much in the Son as in the Father. There is this one common life in both, so that the Son lives by the life that is in the Father ; the Son is wise with the Father's wisdom, pure in His purity, strong in His strength. And the perfections of the Godhead are common to both the blessed Persons ; they pervade both. "All things that the Father hath are Mine," says our Blessed Lord. They act with one common energy, with one will. "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but whatsoever He seeth the Father do, that He doeth likewise." "The Son is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His Person." Our words fail us ; our thoughts are too feeble when we attempt to describe, or even to imagine, this wonderful and entire union between the Father and the Son. It is the highest of all unions.

II. And now see the marvel of what our Lord declares : "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." We could not have dared to say such a thing or to conceive it possible. Close, and

intimate, and perfect, and heavenly, and Divine as is the union and communion between the Father and the Son, there may be a likeness of this communion between us and our Blessed Lord. Our Lord knows what that communion of life between Himself and His Father is. He knows its closeness, its blessedness, and its power. He knows all that His Father is to Him, and all that He is to His Father. And it is He who says, "As the living Father sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." He uses the highest of all unions to express to us what our union with Himself is. If we feed upon our Lord, then, His life passes into us, so that we draw all our powers from Him or draw all His powers into us. We become wise with His wisdom, learning to see things as He sees them, understanding all mysteries and all knowledge because He understands them, knowing the deep things of God because He knows them: "We have an unction from the Holy One, and we know all things." We grow strong in His strength, "strengthened with His might in the inner man," so that we "can do all things through Christ in strengthening us." We grow pure with His purity, as He recreates us from within and makes us new creatures in Himself. We love with His love, with those strange powers of love, which He can give Who is Himself love.

Need I say how blessed this is? Or, rather, could I say how blessed it is? As there are so many of you here now who know what happiness and peace union with Christ gives, I need only say, Contrast this with what we call the death of the soul. You have known perhaps at some moment of your lives what it was to realise the power of sin, to see how the sense of guilt alienates and cuts off from God, so that a man dreads, and fears, and shrinks from, and cowers before God. You have seen, it may be, how sin makes a wreck and ruin of a man, so that all his powers are broken down, and all high aims gone, and his very being so shattered, that he could not be said to live. In such an one the spring of hope seems snapped, and love seems like an impossibility, and peace is lost and gone. We have known such a state, it may be, in ourselves and others. What is it but death?

And, instead of this, feeding on our Blessed Lord brings life. To feed on Him gives us a part in His Passion, which cleanses us from the stains of guilt, and in His Sacrifice, which makes us one with God. Through Him, on Whom we feed, we are consciously made one with God, we are "accepted in the Beloved." We may offer ourselves up to God in and through Christ, in a calm, glad, trustful service of God. But, far more than this, feeding on Christ sustains our powers of serving God. As the powers of the

spiritual life are worn out and exhausted in the midst of trial, and strife, and temptation, in the stress and battle of life, so they are renewed, strengthened, and replaced by the supernatural food which is Christ Himself. There is a supernatural life which is imparted to the soul by the Spirit in our Baptism when we are united to Christ, and for that supernatural life in the holy Eucharist there is a supernatural food which is Christ Himself. It is simply impossible to exaggerate the comfort of this truth. Well may the Blessed Sacrament be called a "divine and comfortable thing to those that will receive it worthily." Think what it is in moments of reawakened penitence, when one of us sees all the ravages which the corruption of sin has worked within him, to say: "Dead as I am, I may yet live by Christ." "Weak as I am, there is a power of Divine life in my Blessed Lord, and I may receive that life into myself, as I feed on Him, and in the strength of it I may live to God, and the very life which I live will be seen by God, and it will be His own Son's life within me. He will see me in His Son, and His Son in me; and I shall be embraced in the fulness of His love." "I live, henceforth, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Forgive me, my brethren. I know how far short this falls of what you have seen, and known, and tasted in yourselves, and have worked out in your own lives through communion with our Blessed Lord. It will only serve to remind you how He has cheered you with forgiveness in your penitence, and rescued you from evil, and put forth His might in you, and stirred you to a higher life, and kindled the fire of His Own love in your hearts, and fought in your battles, and conquered in your victories, and identified Himself with your sorrows and your joys, and made you wonder at His tenderness, and the power and inventiveness of His love, as He made you partakers of the Divine nature, and left you only one thing to doubt about, whether to shrink under the sense of your unworthiness from the closeness of His communion with you, or to press nearer to Him from the sweetness of His own attractions which drew you irresistibly out of yourselves to Him.

III. And now the blessedness of this gift of life in the holy Eucharist shows what the object of your Society should be. It must be to make known to others the blessedness of union with our Lord. You might take as your invitation to those whom you would draw to our Blessed Lord in the holy Eucharist the comfortable words, which the Church uses to encourage us to draw near to our Lord. You may

say to others, "The world is full of troubles, perplexities, cares, sorrows, toils, contests." In the holy Eucharist our Lord is full of peace and calm for those who seek Him: "Come unto Me all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The world is full of death. Men are perishing on all sides in guilt and sin. In the holy Eucharist our Blessed Lord is full of life: "God so loved the world that He gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Ah, there is a light which streams in upon the soul from the altar, a spiritual light which no power of man can put out. There is a clothing of the soul in the pure vestments of the Redeemer which no one can rob us of. There is a hushed posture of adoration of the spirit as it welcomes its Lord, which the world cannot interfere with. All these depend upon an inner life of purity and holiness, which is the true joy of a soul in communion with its Lord, and which nothing from without can touch. "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." The more you have found that our Lord has been full of blessing to yourselves, the more you must long that others may share those blessings.

IV. But in what way are you to lead people to seek our Blessed Lord in this holy Sacrament?

1. Your own rules are, most wisely planned for effecting this. More frequent celebrations will lead people to see what a value we set upon feeding upon our Blessed Lord, and we ought not to rest till He is to us what, in St. Cyprian's days, He was to so many, "Our daily bread"—the day's food by which we live the day's life, and meet the day's temptations and duties.

2. Greater reverence in your outward acts of adoration, again, will witness to the Majesty of Him Who is so close to us in that holy Sacrament.

3. Greater solemnity in the celebration of the Divine mysteries will show how much we feel that we owe to Him on Whom we love to wait with such devotion.

4. But there is a higher and more Divine way of restoring faith in our Blessed Lord's work through the holy Eucharist. Begin, dear brethren, with a deep, tender, compassionate love for those who cannot see that Truth as yet, nor receive it in its fulness. This will attract those who are in error to you. It will melt, move, win them. We have had far too much of argument, hard logical argument, and of strife and debate about the blessed truths of our faith. We have had far too little of tenderness and consideration for others. Alas, the Sacrament of love and unity has been turned into a very symbol

and badge of difference. Do not think that I would have you undervalue theological science, and accuracy of statement of the truth, and keenness of apprehension to discern the exactness of the definition by which the Church has taught us to identify what really is our heritage of truth in the midst of the varying and conflicting views which men take of the truth. It is the truest loyalty to our Blessed Lord to be jealous about all which He taught, and to be exact in teaching men to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded us. And, amongst all the various forms of charity with which God has adorned His Church, there is no greater charity than the charity of dogmatism, which teaches men to see clearly and exactly what God has said. And so, amongst the marvels which God has brought out in His Church, there are few for which I adore Him more profoundly than for His illuminating the great teachers, whose minds and words He has used to expand and unfold His own revelations, or for the clear expressions of the Church's Creeds, in which we learn, from an authority appointed by God Himself, what is truth. But it is one thing to value this Divine guidance for ourselves, to bless and praise God for leading us into truth, and quite another thing to set about forcing these definitions upon others by way of argument, and to make it, as it were, a point of honour to win a

battle in a controversy. Let me ask you to look back, and remember what has been in most cases the issue of such an over-eager and mistaken contention. It begins by being an encounter of opponents instead of a conference of brothers. Each of the disputants puts himself on his guard to defend an opinion which he looks upon as part of his own property, and he shrinks from the slightest concession as though he were allowing a trespass on his own ground. In such a discussion too many things besides the truth are apt to be lost, and he who seems to win most in point of intellectual superiority often loses most in charity, and in any real reverence for truth as a thing that belongs to God. Ah, brethren, reverse the whole plan of discussion. Instead of putting victory as the point first to be aimed at, and, putting love last, or nowhere at all, put victory out of sight altogether, and let love for others be the one ruling principle in all efforts to restore the truth.

One of the greatest of controversialists (Bellarmine) has said, "An ounce of charity is worth a pound of controversy."

Begin, then, with wonder, deep wonder at the goodness of God, who has let you see and know any portion of His truth. Adore Him inwardly for all the comfort and strength which that truth has given you. Look at it as His truth, His Own undeserved, sacred

gift to you, by which He has led your soul to Himself, healed your suffering, sinful nature, and let you know Him in His Own fairness. Then look upon those who do not know the truth as weak and suffering brethren, whom you would give the whole world to see healed. Pity them as you would pity a sick man. Seek to recommend to them the Divine truths which have been such a blessing to you. And ask God, Who has blessed you so richly, to use you, if He will deign to do so, in imparting the same blessings to others.

See what effect this will have at once on the manner of dealing with the particular truths which concern the Blessed Sacrament. It will make you watchful not to use expressions that are likely to be misunderstood. You will avoid needless offence. You will feel that you are intrusted with God's truth, and that your great effort must be to recommend that to your brother who so needs to receive it. You will not shock his prejudices. You will do more. You will hinder his prejudices. You will feel that he is prejudiced, not against the truth itself, but against some perversion of it in his mind, which seems to contradict what he knows to be the truth. You will see from this that he is on God's side, and that he loves God's truth. You will love him the more for this. It will be a bond of union between you. Now

you will take that truth which he does hold as a starting-point. You are one with him in that. It may be the doctrine of our blessed Lord's atonement or of His one Sacrifice for the sins of the world, or that blessed and Catholic doctrine of justification by faith. You will show him how you hold and value these truths. Tenderly, gently you will lead him on to see how the truths about Communion with our Blessed Lord in the Blessed Sacrament rise out of the truths which he holds, how they give its proper exercise to faith in Christ, how they stamp into the soul the doctrine of the atonement, how they lead us to live under the prevailing power of the one Sacrifice, how they are the safeguards of the whole sphere of doctrine of our Lord's Mediation which he holds so dear. And so you will lead him from truth to truth till he embraces the whole circle of the Revelation, and blesses you for so guiding him.

Is this impossible, dear brethren? I do not believe that it is. I believe that nothing is impossible to love. I am ready to say with St. Augustine: "*Ama, et fac quod vis.*" And it is to the triumphs of such love that I dare to invite you all.

Ah, I have thought sometimes what a mission there is at this moment for any one who is possessed with the spirit of love to draw together those who are kept apart by misunderstanding now! Could one ask

for a nobler work than to heal the distractions of our own communion, to save it from disruption, to make it, with its high gifts, a blessing even to a divided Christendom? "Exoriare aliquis!" But all hope of this seems to depend on real love.

5. And where are you to learn such love? Surely in the celebration of the Blessed Sacrament itself. There it is the very purpose of that holy mystery to raise before the eye of your soul Him Who died on the Cross. There therefore you learn the value of souls, and what your Lord must have felt of ardent desire to draw them to Himself, and through Himself to God. And, the more you see how dear souls are to Him, the more you must long to guide them to Him. There you will learn to sacrifice self, and to suffer patiently in the effort of winning others. But, much more than this, there you will plead the priceless Sacrifice for the weak, the lost, the blind, the ignorant, and then you will go forth with a quickened watchfulness in dealing with others not to make that Sacrifice of no avail. More still, there you will receive ever fresh lights of Revelation from our Blessed Lord's love into your own soul, and as you feel what the truth is to you, and realise that it is His truth, you will be the more awfully anxious not to misrepresent it, not to distort it, not to use expressions about it which He has not authorised, either

by His own voice or by the voice of His Church. And surely this is a special characteristic of the Church of England. She is reverently cautious not to pronounce infallibly on what has not been defined by the whole Church, not to set others against what it would be such a vast gain for them to receive, and what your Lord so longs that they should receive. But, most of all, there, in the blessed Sacrament, you will receive His life into yourself. You will eat Him, and live by Him, and that inward life of Christ, taken into the soul, will show itself in outward acts in you. Something of His character will be formed in you, and, as you catch His divine compassion, the compassion of Him who sighed forth, "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life," you will yearn more to be of use to others, to be eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. Your very manner will become meek and lowly, after the fashion of your Lord; and your very voice gentle, like that of Him who did not strive nor cry; your very tenderness visible, like that of Him who said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that be sick:" and as you are transformed into His image, and as something of the fairness of His own likeness shines out in you, men will take knowledge that you have been with Jesus. And the reproduction of His life in you will speak more of the reality of His Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, and

in you through the Blessed Sacrament, than whole volumes of controversy, or the most moving of the rites of the Church. Think me extravagant, if you will, dear brethren, but I believe intensely in the power of love to work such miracles, and in the Blessed Sacrament as the source of love to those who hold real communion with our Lord, the Pattern, the Incarnation, the Source, and Fount, the Heart from which flow out the pulses of love through the Church. And so I would implore you that you may at once test the reality of your own communions, and ensure the success of the work of your Confraternity by seeing how far the life of Christ (which is the love of Christ, for His whole life was love, and love is His very life and being) is produced in you. "Love is life's only sign." See, I beseech you, who is the theologian of the Blessed Sacrament, who is the chosen mouthpiece of those great utterances of our blessed Lord concerning the holy Eucharist, who recorded the words of our text? It was the disciple who leaned on our Lord's breast who was brought into such close communion with Him, who drew His Master's own life into himself, and whose whole writings breathe of love to the brethren. Learn, learn of him; or, rather, learn where he learnt. "A Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament," what is it? what should it be? A brotherhood instinct with the tender compassion for all failing,

famishing, worn-out souls, the compassion of Him who said, "I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint by the way;" a brotherhood which stands in a world on which the pangs of death are seizing, and echoes the words of heavenly mercy: "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."

XV.

THE FIERCENESS OF TEMPTATION AND THE
VICTORY.

Preached at Oxford. Lent, 1873.

Genesis iii. 5.

“Ye shall be as gods.”

OUR subject to-night is Temptation. In one sense it ought not to be a hard thing to speak about temptation in Oxford. You must feel some interest—perhaps a very deep interest—in the subject. No one can believe that there is a God to be loved and followed, that to love and follow God is the one true happiness of the soul, and that there are hosts of evil spirits whose one work is to cut us off from God—no one can believe this, and not feel the deepest interest in learning how to stand against these evil ones so as not to lose his soul, himself, his God, his all. So the subject must interest you. And it is one that you can understand. I do not mean that it is not full of mysteries.

It is full of mysteries ; but so is all that we know of the nature of God or the nature of man, of the state of this world or the state of the next, of our own bodies or our own souls, of the existence of good and evil in the world. All things are not naked and open to our eyes. We know only in part. We can see only a portion of the truth. But there is at least no need to tell you what temptation is—you know it only too well. It meets you on all sides, and in all shapes and forms. You are tempted in your studies and amusements, alone and in company, through those older and those younger than yourselves, through the books that you read and the persons that you meet, in the things of God and in the things of men, through the body, soul, and spirit, through your passions, your intellect, and that higher part of your being through which you hold intercourse with God, in the use of all your faculties, through all your senses, in the use of all that God has given you—your money, time, talents, influence over others. You yourselves, all that you are and all that you have, may be used for God or against Him, and you are being tempted, tried, put to the proof continually as to whether you will be true to God or false to Him. From morning till night a thousand things are brought to bear upon you to draw you away from God. And you feel the stress of this conflict. There is no more

need to tell you what temptation is than there would be to tell a man what a battle is when he is in the thick of the fight, and feels the blows falling fast upon him, and is in peril of his life ; or to tell a man what a swift stream is when his muscles are aching with the effort to breast it, or when he is being whirled hopelessly along by it, without a thought of withstanding its force. No ; as far as the force and power, the variety, the soreness of the temptation is concerned (unless this place is changed for the better), you know only too well what temptation means.

But there is a reason why there is more need to speak about temptation here than in any other place. The fiercer the battle, the more need to understand the character of the enemy, his aim and object, and the way in which to resist him. And here is the real difficulty in our subject of to-night. Our great enemy's whole effort is to prevent us from understanding him. He disguises himself and goes into the battle. He strives to hide his aims and objects, and the mode of his attack. The more determined is his assault, the more it is veiled. So he will be against me in speaking, and will try to make my words useless to you. And he will be against you while you listen, and will try to shut out from your hearts any thought that might make you stronger in

resisting him. We can, then, but turn to God and ask Him in our hearts to help us to see what His enemy and ours is seeking to do to us.

The whole nature of temptation is laid bare to our eyes in the history of the attack of the Evil One on our first parents. And the first thing that we notice is that the temptation is carried on by a personal enemy from without. There are temptations from within: "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." "From within, out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." There is a "lusting of the flesh against the Spirit," a working of the heart and mind in the fallen man against God. There is a corruption within the very soul. But evil may be, and is, suggested from without. It is taught and insinuated into the mind by others. Alas! there is no need to tell you that. Words and conversations, jests and innuendos will instil into a pure and holy mind thoughts which may be a misery to it for years. There are men who are haunted, and perhaps will be haunted to their dying day, by imaginations of evil, or sceptical doubts, which are ruthlessly cast into their minds in the midst of the cruel carelessness of their companions' talk in this place. You can sow the seeds. You cannot uproot them. And what we can do for each other, that the tempter can do to all of us. He has a power of suggesting evil to

us.* He cannot indeed force it upon us, but he can throw the shadow of it across our minds. He can suggest doubts of the goodness of God, stir us to discontent, urge us to aim at something which God has not thought fit to give us, make us offers of advancement and gain if we will act on his suggestions. He can whisper as he did to Eve, "Ye shall be as gods."

1. All this comes out in the history of the first temptation. In the very earliest revelation from God, the great Enemy is shown to us, seeking to overcloud the mind, and to separate the heart from God.

2. But this is only a small part of what God has

* John Smith, Queen's College, Cambridge, 1673, p. 448: "I doubt not but there are many more Divine impressions upon the minds of men both good and bad, from the good Spirit of God, than are ordinarily observed; there are many soft and silent impulses, gentle motions, like our Saviour putting in His hand by the hole of the door (Cant. v.), soliciting and exciting men to religion and holiness; which they many times regard not, and take little notice of. There are such secret messages often brought from heaven to the souls of men by an unknown and unseen hand. And as there are such Divine ministrations sliding into the souls of men from God, so there are, no question, many and frequent suggestions to the fallacies and imaginations of men arising from the Evil Spirit; and a watchful observer of his own heart and life shall often hear the voice of Wisdom, and the voice of Folly speaking to him. He that hath his eyes opened may see both the visions of God falling upon him, and discern the false and foolish fires of Satan that would draw away his mind from God."

shown us. As the revelation of God becomes fuller, the powers of evil are brought out into clearer light. Contrast the New Testament with the Old, and you will see this at once.

It is our Blessed Lord Who tells us that He "beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." It is He Who tells us that the Devil not only did not abide in the truth himself, and fell from the perfection of being which God had given to him, but that he is a "murderer," a destroyer of the souls of others. So our Lord describes to us the terrible work of the wicked one. A man hears the truth of God, but he is none the better for it. We should have said, perhaps, that his mind was full of other things, that he was careless, or inattentive, or worldly. But our Lord says that the Devil has taken the word out of his heart.

Men fall away from the truth of God. They give up the old truths which God taught to His Church. They bring in novelties. They speculate and fall into error. They become heretics, schismatics, or unbelievers. Members of the Church fall away from the holiness of life to which they were bound. The lives of Christians become lax, careless, sinful. Men mourn as they see the increase of unbelief, the growth of wickedness amongst those who call themselves Christians.

Our Lord lifts the veil. He shows us that the tempter has been at work. He says, "An enemy has done this." The Devil has sown tares among the wheat of God's harvest-field, the Church.

The masses of the Jews reject our Lord while He is living on earth. They will not be won by His fairness. They will not accept His offers of mercy. He shows us that they have yielded to the power of the Evil One. "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the works of your father ye will do."

Not on the masses only, not on those far off from Him is the attack made. It is most determined, most eager, most full of malice, as it is brought to bear on the chosen twelve, so close, so dear to Him: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat." So deadly, so personal is the conflict.

Nay, one is even torn from the band, the unhappy Judas. You tell me that he was covetous, that his mind was set on money, that he was dishonest, that he cared so for the world that he could not care for our Lord. Yes, but our Lord speaks of him as being under the power of the Devil, and the evangelist reveals the success of the tempter in those awful words: "After the sop Satan entered into him."

Such were our Lord's revelations of the personal attack, of the power and craft of the Evil One. It may

be that He permitted the existence and conflict with the powers of evil to be made audible, and almost visible—visible at least in their effects, when He spoke to, and answered, and cast out, and controlled the evil spirits in His cures of those possessed by devils.

3. But, clear as this teaching is, it is brought home with a still greater clearness of application to the case of individuals in the inspired writings of the apostles. As those who had been brought into the Church had been delivered from the power of darkness, the Prince of the power of the air, and were translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, with all His love, and strength, and wisdom, and power pledged to them to shield and guard them, so the battle which they will have to fight is set before them in all its awful clearness. They have to wrestle, not with man, but "with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places." Hand to hand, face to face, unseen by us indeed, but only therefore all the more dangerous, we have to meet these enemies. Fallen from their first estate, but still with the vast powers of fallen angels, they work in the children of disobedience. Alienated from God, they work against Him, and especially against us who belong to Him. So St. Peter describes their chief and leader as our special adversary, and warns us that he walks about as a

roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. What a strife is this! Such power, such craft (the wiles of the Devil, as the apostle describes them), such malice, such untiring, persevering onset, brought to bear on our poor souls, and the issue, death—the death with which the great murderer slays those who let themselves be conquered by him. Is there not enough here to make us understand the cry of the apostle, spoken as with the passionate earnestness of a mother who sees her children about to become the prey of a ravenous beast that comes sweeping down upon them, “Be sober, be vigilant”? Oh, if anything could wake us, young and old, from giddiness and thoughtlessness, from hurrying through life without thinking to what our steps are leading us, or what snares and pitfalls are spread around us, or what deadly blows are being aimed at us, it would be the remembrance of the spiritual enemies that we have to deal with, and the keen eyes that are bent upon us, and the fiery darts of scorn, or passion, or contempt of God, or unbelief, that are being hurled at us. Surely one steady thought of what temptation means might well sober the maddest of us all. It would make us even understand the somewhat over-stern saying of the Saint to those whose merriment seemed to show him that they did not feel the dangers that were threatening them: “What! you can laugh, and the

Devil's eye is on you, and he is bent on slaying your soul." Here, then, are the enemies against whom we have to stand. These are our tempters.

II. But now, if we wish to be on our guard, what are the temptations that are brought to bear upon us? Rather, what are they not? A spiritual writer says, "We have almost as many temptations as we have thoughts." Every passion may be a field for temptation. Almost every friend may be used to tempt us, as Eve was used by the Serpent to tempt Adam. The Evil One has thousands of bribes, and inducements, and offers, and allurements for the thousands of souls that he seeks to win. He offered our Blessed Lord all the kingdoms of the world; and his offer was worthless, for the love of the Father outshone all else. He offered Judas thirty pieces of silver, and he won the poor mean soul, for the silver looked brighter than the face of Jesus. He has his price for the scholar, for the man of pleasure, for the young and warm-hearted, for the old and cautious. The coins are poured out fast from his mint, and they are of all values. There is the fair-seeming gold of a great spiritual temptation to vain-glory and self-complacency, or to leadership among the servants of God, or to skill in theology, or to a reputation for spiritual knowledge. There is the silver, the bright, shining silver, that looks so pure

and white, that shows no sign of alloy, of high intellectual power, the fascination of being looked up to as large-minded and liberal, and as one who can break down old barriers of thought. There is the baser metal of sensuality, self-indulgence, softness, extravagance, debauch. The coins are of all values. One sweet draught more will win a drunkard's soul, and the satisfaction of the closing sentence in a well-wrought argument against God will win a sceptic's. The applause of a senate, of a parliament, of a nation—yes, even of a synod—or of the voice of the people, or of the Press, will buy one man; a single smile of a woman will make sure of another. The ringing laugh that followed the first unholy jest, or the first breach of modesty in speech, or the first ribald song, has been found enough to pay for a young man's soul; and the praise for liberality in giving up some ancient safeguard of the truth of God, and throwing off the prejudices of childhood, whether the childhood of the man or of the Church, has been found enough to pay for some old man's soul. The coins are of all values. Yes; but they are marked with one stamp—the stamp of lifting up the soul against God. Rather, perhaps, it would be truer to say there is a stamp which ought to be there and is not—there is no image or likeness of the King upon them. The sovereignty of God is effaced. This

marks the temptation. God is to be kept out of sight, to be disregarded, forgotten, dethroned. And man is to be put into His place. Man is to become a god to himself. It is the old first temptation reproduced in a thousand forms, under a thousand disguises, but still the same : "Ye shall be as gods." Has God forbidden this? Has He commanded that? Does He warn you that you will suffer by disobedience? Has he said that you will surely die? Do not be restrained by such idle fears, or submit yourselves to such a bondage of restraint. You can choose better for yourselves than God has chosen for you. Take what He has forbidden, break off these bands which fetter you, and "ye shall be as gods." Choose for yourselves ; be independent of God.

This is the work of him, who abode not in the truth, who kept not his first estate, because he threw off the authority of God, and who has been ever since a liar against God and a murderer of souls. Ah, could he say this—"ye shall be as gods"—and not betray by a groan the misery into which he has fallen?

Independence of God. This has, as it were, the mark of the heel of the Evil One burnt into it, and shows itself to be the weapon which he has handled against our souls. All his temptations take the form of independence of God. What a thought for this

time, for this age in which we live ! The constant whisper of the tempter is : Throw off these restraints—the restraints of a father's wishes, of the habits of a religious home and childhood, of college rule and discipline, of the opinion of the soberer members of society, of practices of devotion and piety, of holy places and holy seasons, of the law, and will, and commandments of God, of all that has been gathered up into the Creeds and teaching of the Church of His Revelation. Throw off these trammels upon your passions, your enjoyments, your pleasures, your thoughts. You will know what true freedom of the Spirit is. You will be above conventionalities, and prejudices, and rules, and fears of the displeasure of God—"Ye shall be as gods."

Ah, so he whispered to Eve ; and what has followed ? Every sorrow that the world has known ; a flood of sorrows that poured into a world that had thrown off the encircling arms of God, to be protected by Him no longer ; every sad spiritual defeat ; the alienation of a host of souls from God ; the slavery of darkened intellects, and impure affections, and perverted wills.

What followed in the case of the Evil One himself ? If he could tell us what it has been to fall from his first estate, we should see what it is to be independent of God.

Is there any one here to whom he has made that

lying promise, "Thou shalt be as God"? Would that poor wretch not say, "Ah, so I have indeed become a god to myself! I have followed my own will, indulged myself, lived for myself, till I have become the slave of self—selfish, and narrow, and weak, and purposeless, and aimless, with nothing to draw me out of self, or lift me above self; no consideration for others, no generosity of spirit, no nobility of nature. Ah, this is the independence of God into which the Evil One has seduced me. The law of God no more restrains my passions; they tyrannise over me. His truth no more enlightens my mind; I am lost in my own darkness. His grace no more acts upon my will; I am driven helplessly as each gust of temptation sweeps down upon me."

Such are the full consequences of yielding to temptation—an utter wreck of the whole being in separation from God. It is not often that such depths of misery can be reached in this life, but it is well to look right down into these depths of woe, that, if we have gone ever so few steps down into that darkness, we may turn and fly upwards to the light.

III. See, then, how to resist your temptations. Independence of God is the evil that lurks under all forms of temptation. Then dependence on God is the safeguard against it.

There are two tempers of mind to foster in our-

selves: great distrust of self, great trust in God. Look at the real character of your enemies as we have considered it—their strange spiritual powers, their craft, their untiring malice, their experience in the force of temptation practised on the hearts of men for thousands of years, the energy which their hatred of God lends to their attack upon us, and you cannot but distrust yourselves. The spirit indeed may be willing, but at least the flesh is weak. Remember how dear you are to our Blessed Lord, how for you He was made man, and endured temptation in His own Person, that He might know what you have to bear, how He conquered that you might conquer. Think how the memory of His own temptation is in His mind still, and that He can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and, in that He hath suffered being tempted, is able to succour you when you are tempted. See Him wrestling out the great strife for your soul on His Cross, yourself and all your perils thought of in the midst of His pangs, and death itself borne rather than you should be lost. Think how He loved you, and gave Himself for you. And so trust largely in that love. Appeal to it by prayer. Shelter yourself under it. Dare not, wish not, to live without it. As the enemies press around you, and seek to hem you in on every side, flee to Him to hide you. Live in constant communion with

your Lord. Long and hunger after Him. Receive Him into your soul again and again. You will soon know the meaning of those words: "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world," as the light, and purity, and strength which you draw into your soul make you able to cast off the darts of temptation. The very fierceness and continuance of the attack will only make you press into a closer union with our Lord.

I am not saying that you will have no difficulties. You will have them in abundance. The very fact that we feel the sharpness of the battle going on shows that we are not yet conquered. And a Saint has said: "the greatest of all temptations is not to be tempted." But what are difficulties? They are opportunities for a man to show his courage, his firmness, his determination, his faithfulness. You have felt this in the contests in which the strength of your bodies or the powers of your minds have been put to the proof. Is it only when the soul is put to the proof, in the contest for life and death eternal, when angels surround you, at once to guard, and rejoice over you in your victory, when God watches and smiles upon your faithfulness, is it only then that your coward heart is to be ready to make too much of difficulties, and too little of the joy of being true to God? It cannot, it must not be. Nay, these

difficulties of temptation, which are opportunities for you to show how you love God, are they not also opportunities for God? His love for you, His care, the strength of His grace, the power of His presence, all these will come out in the midst of the sore strife. As He walked with the three children in the burning fiery furnace, so He will walk with you. You will know more of Him than you would ever have known but for the stress of the conflict in which He has nerved your soul. Hear His own words: "I am with him in trouble. I will deliver him, and bring him to honour. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation"; "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness;" "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

So He cheers thee, strengthens thee. He almost shows thee what is ready for thee at the end of thy brave, bold strife: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Ah, will not thine own heart answer: If it be His will, let the strife come, the fiery darts of the wicked, the onset of His enemies and mine, the battle which is to try my loyalty, the force of bad example round me, the ridicule and mockery of those who care not for God. Let me

have something to bear, to suffer, to do for His dear sake, that it may be seen that, whatever its weakness, my poor soul is at least true to Him. What did He not bear for me? That Form that stoops under the Cross, that is nailed to it, that pale Face, those bleeding Brows, they demand some answering love from me; I dare to say with one, who could look on through the very strife itself to the moment of supreme joy when God shall approve those who have been true to Him: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life."

XVI.

THE GREAT OVERTHROW.

Preached at St. Giles, Oxford. March 23, 1866.

St. John xii. 31.

“Now is the judgment of this world ; now shall the Prince of this world be cast out.”

SOLDIERS of Christ, we are leading you to the battle. If you will, we may lead you to the victory. You have been sworn to take your part in the great strife between the powers of light and darkness. The Great King has taken you into His army. The Captain of your salvation, out of His pure love, has given you your place in the ranks of His hosts. Ye did not choose Him, but He chose you ; and, as I look round, I seem to see glistening on your brows the cross of light which was traced there, as if by His finger, at the moment of your baptism, when you were enrolled by Him, and pledged to fight manfully under His banner, against Sin, the World, and the

Devil, and to continue His faithful soldiers and servants unto your life's end. As I look back into the past, I seem to see written in His book the vows by which you were bound to fight the good fight of faith. As I look on into the future, I seem to see in His hand the crowns, the radiant crowns of life which the Lord hath promised to give to them that have been tried in the strife, and have been shown to have loved Him. But I see no names written on the crowns. I cannot tell who shall wear them, on whose brows they shall be placed ; nor if there be any here who shall be such a coward in the battle of life that another shall take his crown. I hear only these words : "Endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life ; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And, if a man also strive for mastery, yet he is not crowned except he strive lawfully."

Lose not this crown, then, brethren. Throw it not away. Strive, with all your hearts and souls, that it may be yours. See what motives have been given you to make the battle against evil the one great earnest business of life. We have told you of the face to face conflict with Satan and his angels ; of the power that they have to darken the soul and steep it in misery. We have told you also of the power of

our Blessed Lord, working with all His love in His Church to redeem and save the soul. We have counted up for you all the blessed aids that have been provided for you. We have even dared to speak plainly of the increased fierceness of the strife as it mounts to its crisis, that you might see in all their fulness the dangers that threaten you. Surely in all this there is more than enough to make you watch and live ever on your guard, and fight manfully and warily, and claim earnestly the graces, and gifts, and powers that are to be had from our Blessed Lord, that you may be able to stand in the evil day. Can you dare to sleep now, or to dream away life, while the eyes of the angelic powers of darkness are bent upon you with the steady gaze of malice watching to ruin and destroy you? Can you live without seeking Christ, when to seek and to find Him is to find strength, and safety, and union with God, and peace—peace and real calm within, even in the very midst of the outward conflict? Surely you will not so forget the lessons which this Lent has taught you. You will fight, you will strive, you will stand against the wiles of the Devil.

But perhaps you are ready to say to me: "It is indeed our very hearts' wish to be true to God. We hate and abhor the evil that sets us against Him. We would not for a moment join ourselves wilfully

to those rebel hosts that have risen up against Him. We can say with all our souls, 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee, and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? Yea, I hate them right sore, even as though they were mine enemies.' We know what we owe to God; we would not for the world be untrue to Him. But, oh, the battle is so fierce and so unceasing—and we are so weak, and we grow so worn and weary in the strife." I know it well, dear brethren, and therefore we bring before you the subject of to-night. The battle is great—great in the daring wickedness of those who are fighting against God; great in the vastness of power, and craft, and experience, and malice, which the evil ones bring to bear on you; great in the tremendous issues which hang on your conquering and being conquered; but, if the battle is great, how great will be the overthrow at its close. It is of that I wish you to think. Think of all evil being cast out of God's kingdom at the last. Think of Satan being bruised under your feet; and the ceasing of the strife; and the contrast of the peace and rest with the soreness of the present struggle. Think of the soul gathered in to the calm safety of the presence of God, to be folded in His embrace, and shielded and guarded from all the buffetings of evil, and knowing itself safe at last, and sure of His love for evermore,

and, what is almost greater, sure of being able to love Him.

But, even while I speak, I seem to hear a cry of suffering bursting from your hearts, as though you said to me : " For pity's sake do not speak so of rest, and peace, and calm, and safety. It tortures us to hear of these, while the hot breath of Satan is almost now burning on our cheek, and our knees are weak with wrestling in prayer, and our spirits are smarting with blow after blow from the Evil One." Nay, but, my brethren, it is not I who bid you think of the great overthrow ; it is our Blessed Lord Himself Who turns your eyes towards it. More than 1800 years ago He said, " Now is the judgment of this world ; now shall the Prince of this world be cast out." Our Blessed Lord knew the power and malice of the Evil One, for His own pure soul had been beset and harassed by him in the hour of His temptation. He knew that He should still be fiercely assaulted again by the tempter, for those last hours of His trial were hastening on which He called the hours of the power of darkness. He knew that for year after year, through all the long warfare of the Church, the Devil would still walk about seeking whom he might devour. He could see all the wearing struggle that His elect must pass through. There lay, as in an open book before Him, all the sad history of our poor tempted

souls ; all our shuddering at the evil that forces itself upon us ; the wrestling of the aching spirit, its failings and faintings, its sighs and groans, its gasps of exhaustion, its bleeding wounds, its dangers, its passing almost under the chilling shadow of death. And yet He could say, "Now is the Prince of this world cast out."

And why ?

Because He could see the end from the beginning. The first step was taken in that mighty march of the triumph of good over evil. The Powers of heaven had taken their side in the conflict with evil. There could be but one issue. The overthrow of the enemy was already as certain as if it had taken place. And so our Blessed Lord directs our eyes to this end, that throughout the strife we may fight as those who know that they may have the victory through Him. How wonderful is the spring of Hope ! Saint Augustine says : "Love, and you may do what you will." May we not almost say : "Hope, and you may do what you will" ?

What, then, will the overthrow be ?

What was the beginning and nature of the rebellion ? It has been thought that in Satan's case the rebellion arose in his refusing his dependence on God. He and the other fallen angels "kept not their first estate." In some sense they wished to be "as the

Most High." Either they were proudly discontented with the rank in creation which God had allotted them, and so they would not trust in His wisdom ; or they thought to stand by their own power, instead of being upheld in righteousness by God, and so they refused the offer of His love. And thus they fell away from God.

And next, fallen themselves, they sought to work out the fall of man in the same manner. Satan tempted man, too, to aim at a higher state than God had given him. He moved our first parents to seek by their own act to be as gods. He lured them on to disobey God by promising them that they would gain new advantages for themselves. And so man, unhappy man, fell away from God. He lost that blessed union with God, through which his soul had been kept, and guarded, and blessed. He found out, indeed, what it was to be a god to himself, to be left to his own feebleness, unaided, unsupported by any higher power. He was stripped of the gift of original righteousness. The light and strength of God was gone from him. Naked and defenceless, he seemed to be an easy prey for the malice of Satan. His mind and understanding were darkened, and overclouded. His affections went wandering away from God. His will was feeble and perverse. He was ever fleeing from his true happiness, and hunting

after new forms of misery. This was the overthrow of man. Was it hopeless and without a remedy? Was it also the overthrow of God? No; it was the occasion of the triumph of the love and grace of God: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Every misery of man was an appeal to the heart of God. Man had become dark in soul, weak, corrupt. He was wounded, suffering, sore beset, dying. So then the Lord Himself became man. The Evil One had led man astray from God, and made him his slave, and was ever tempting him by some false bait farther and farther from the way of happiness. The Word was made flesh. He lived and dwelt among us in His Own world. Full of grace and truth, He attracted hearts to Himself by His Own purity and holiness, by His powers of love and sympathy. He drew men back to God. But, more than this, our blessed Lord made Himself the source of all blessing to us: "Out of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." If we are dark, in Him is light. If we are weak, in Him is strength. If we are corrupt, in Him is purity. If we are wounded, through His stripes we may be healed. If we are suffering, in Him is health. If we are sore beset, in Him is might. If we are dying, in Him is life. He is "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." In His cross there is an atoning power

to take away all sin, for God has "made Him to be sin for us Who knew no sin, that we may be made the righteousness of God in Him." In Himself, in His Person is a store of all graces that we can need ; and we may be "complete in Him." See, then, how even now the overthrow of Satan is going on. We may well say it with awe, for who knows whether some of the evil ones may not be listening? But we may still say it in a spirit of steadfast faith. It is the simple truth. What has the whole work of Satan been from the moment of the first temptation? What but to cut us off from God? What but to make us seek to be independent of God? What but to persuade us that we shall be better without God? And what do all the miseries which Satan has brought into the world accomplish? They make us flee to God. The power of the Evil One is put forth against us, and, as we cast ourselves upon our Lord for aid, we find that the words are true, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." We faint with weariness of heart as the blows of our spiritual adversaries fall thick and fast upon us, and again we cry to our Lord, and find that, when we are weak in ourselves, then we are strong in Him. As the forms of evil and fashions of sin are multiplied and grow into a gathered cloud around us, we feel the horror of the great darkness which threatens to hide

the purity of God from us, and we sigh forth, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth that they may lead me," and the eyes of our understanding are lightened with His light. The Evil One seeks to dazzle us with the glitter and tinsel of the toys of the world, and we grow bewildered, till we close our eyes that at the least we may shut out all which is not God; and the image and fairness of God rises in vision before us, as a voice speaks in our ear the words, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Old memories of sin come back upon us, and are intensified in their blackness by the powers of evil, as if to drive us from a God Whom we have so grieved, and the very misery of the gloom that settles down upon us makes us crave the more earnestly for the peace which the love of God alone can give, and we learn how "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth from all sin." Touched by the love of God, we long to love Him, but our soul seems to have no power to love. We wish to rise above the world, and fix our hearts on Him to Whom we owe all we have and all we are, but we are beaten back by the gusts of temptation, and sink down in utter feebleness, like a poor bird whose fluttering wings can make no head against the sweeping of the fierce storm, and then, in this very feebleness, we look out of ourselves, away from, above ourselves to Him Who has all the power

of God, and all the tender compassion of man for us who are tempted as He was tempted of old. We cry to Him, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing ; I fail, I faint, I die without Thee ; I am not myself unless Thou, Who didst give me my being, dost hold my soul in life." And then comes from our Lord the answer, so full of love and blessing : "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." And we answer yet again : "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Not by might, nor by power of my own, but 'by His Spirit,' let the work be done in me, on me, by me. To know Him, His power, His blessing, His love, all that He is and can be to the soul, all that He is in Himself, His fairness, wisdom, goodness, purity, perfection ; to lose the thought of self, and live by Him, and for Him, and in Him ; this is the peace, and rest, and joy, and happiness, and only true life of my soul."

And so, even as life goes on, the soul unlearns its independence, and learns the true blessedness of dependence upon God, and the Devil's craft is foiled.

And is this, then, you will say, the great overthrow ? Not in its perfection and fulness, my brethren, but in its beginning and progress. And therefore, when the nature of God and the nature of man had already

been united in His person, when the cross was almost reached, and Himself prepared to be the sacrifice for sin, our Lord said, "Now is the Prince of this world cast out."

But what, then, will be the great overthrow in its completion and fulness? To us it will be the entire reversal of all that Satan and his angels have planned against us, in their hatred both of God and of us. Satan's plan has been to alienate us from God; to make us mistrust God, and rebel against Him; and then to build up by the memory of our guilt a dark wall of separation to bar our return to God. "The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil." By His life on earth, by all the tenderness of His compassion, by His thousand ministries of mercy, by His patient restoration of the lost, He has shown us that there is no love which we can trust in like the love of God: of God the Son, Who came to seek and to save that which was lost; of God the Father, Who sent His Only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him; of God the Holy Ghost, Who sheds abroad the Love of God in our hearts. So He has banished from our hearts the mistrust of God. By His death our Lord has reconciled us to God, and thrown down the wall of fear and dread which Satan had tried to build up between us and God.

Again, the plan of Satán was to make us seek to be independent of God. The Son of God has taught us to find our whole joy and happiness in being united to God, dwelt in by Him, transformed and changed through Him, so that it is only because He lives that we live also. Stranger still, so complete is the overthrow of Satan's malice, so entirely has his plan of hatred been counterworked by the overwhelming power of Divine love, that the very words which Satan used to seduce man from God, "Ye shall be as gods," have been miraculously fulfilled for us by God Himself.* In Satan's mouth they were a deadly lie, for to depart from God was to lose all gifts of God that gave us any

* St. Aug., De Civitate Dei, xxii. 1 : "Qui cum præsciret Angelos quosdam per elationem, quâ ipsi sibi ad beatam vitam sufficere vellent, tanti boni desertores futuros, non eis ademit hanc potestatem ; potentius et melius esse judicans, etiam de malis benefacere, quam mala esse non sinere."

St. Aug., vol. viii. 560. B (Bened. Ed.) : "Ideo necesse est, ut qui malum alteri prius inferendo vincere videtur, amplius ipse bonum amittendo vincatur . . . et quod ad tempus prævaluisse visus est diabolus *homine superato*, etiam sic in æternum victus est *homine reparato*."

St. Aug., De Civ. Dei, xxii. 4 : "Ibi vacantes videbimus quoniam Ipse est Deus : quod nobis ipsi esse volumus, quando ab illo cecidimus, audientes a seductore, 'Eritis sicut dii' ; et recedentes a vero Deo, quo faciente dii essemus Ejus participatione non desertione. Quid enim sine Illo fecimus, nisi quod in viâ Ejus defecimus ? A Quo refecti, et gratiâ majore perfecti, vacabimus in æternum, videntes quia Ipse est Deus, Quo pleni erimus, quando Ipse erit omnia in omnibus."

likeness to Him. Yet how strange a truth is there in them for us still ! How may we tremble with awe and thrill with love and gratitude as we feel that through Christ we have been actually made partakers of the Divine nature, so that in some sense we are as God ! We are wise with the wisdom that comes from God ; we are strong with His own strength working in us ; we love with the love that He sheds abroad in our hearts ; “we are being changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” We are His and He is ours.

Imagine, then, the meeting in the day of completed redemption, when our Lord shall come to claim as His own for ever those on whom His work has been done, and we may imagine the great overthrow. There in the midst shall be the throne, and seated on it the Second Adam, both God and man—man with a perfection of nature beyond our power to conceive, because in Him it is joined to the nature of God, and filled with all the glory which that union can give. Round Him are gathered the thousands of His saints, their every affection fastened on Him ; their every longing satisfied in Him ; their most ardent desires, more than fulfilled—their highest hopes more than realised. Trial, suffering, struggle, weakness, darkness, even their very failings and falls have only helped to bring them nearer and nearer to Him. As

life passed on they only hung upon Him more. The old self died out of them. A new self passed into them as they drew the strength and Spirit of Jesus into them. They are new creatures in Christ Jesus. They live with His life ; He in them, and they in Him, as He is in His Father and His Father in Him. The very warmth of love that throbs in them is but the beating of a pulse that issues from the heart of Jesus. As life ran on, they offered themselves up more and more in sacrifice to God, and that sacrifice of themselves was accepted through the priceless sacrifice of our Lord. They have panted after God and longed for Him, as each gift of His visited their souls. And now, at last, the open vision of Him is to be granted to them. They have longed to lose their own will in doing His, and now they are to find their joy in doing that will under His own eye. The hour is come when, in the fulness of all the meaning of those words, God is to be all in all ; God is to be the whole joy, and happiness, and peace, and delight of His children. And He is to be in all, their very inward strength, the innermost core of their being, filling, refreshing, satisfying them, making them to love and live for Him with the love and life which He gives.

Imagine that moment, and imagine Satan having one glance—one moment's glance of that bliss of the

saints, one guess, one faint guess of all that they have gained almost through his own malice, through the very dependence on God which he would not have—and all that he has lost! We dare hardly imagine what thoughts will pass through the minds of the lost angels at that moment. As they see, perhaps for an instant, the radiance of the glory of Heaven shining out from Him that sits on the great white throne, and His love beaming forth to welcome the saints and their love answering His, will there come sweeping over the memories of the lost the thought of the time when they stood around the throne of the most High, and when His light fell on their spirits, and they lifted their own songs of adoration to Him, and will this add a deeper tinge to the gloom of their desolate outcast hearts? As they see the fruits of the love of God in all the purity and joy of the redeemed, will they feel more bitterly the accursed folly which cut them off from God? Will they see what God might have been for ever to them, as they see what He is to those who are to be His Own for evermore? Will they read their own utter condemnation for refusing to abide in God, as they learn what marvels the love of God has done in raising fallen men? Will redeeming and sanctifying love testify against them?

When St. Paul says that the saints shall judge

angels, does he mean that those who have known what God is, who have learnt in their hour of danger, and weakness, and suffering, and corruption what He can do for the soul, will now join in the sentence upon those who could reject the love of God? Will heaven and earth together cast out into their self-chosen darkness those whom the light of the love of God could not move and win to itself by its fairness?

It may be so. There are at least clear and startling words spoken by the lips of Him Who was perfect truth and perfect love, which tell us of an "everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels." These are words which suggest rather than describe the woe of the outcast angels when they shall have been driven forth finally and for ever from even hovering round the kingdom of God, to be preyed upon within by the fierceness of the spirits' rebellion which shall find vent for itself no more in the active strife against God.* This side of the great overthrow must not be forgotten. But we have dwelt rather on the love of God which is shown in delivering us from the Evil One. And why? Because we would bind your hearts to God. It is your only safety, as it is the only way to

* St. Augustine says of Satan that for a most malevolent solace of his own damnation he seeks to have others condemned with him (vol. vi. 292, Ed. Ben.).

happiness. In the battle of life we must choose our side. In the pride of a young heart we may trust to our own integrity, depend on our own good intentions, care for no knowledge that we cannot gain for ourselves, and fancy that we can be as gods. This can issue only in a great overthrow. Like Satan, in our pride we shall fall as lightning from heaven, from hopes, and graces, and from God.

In the humility of faith we may make God our all. The constant aspiration of our hearts may be, "My soul hangeth upon Thee ; Thy right hand hath upholden me." So we shall seek to know God through the revelation which Christ has given to His Church. We shall seek to have our souls cleansed through Him Who gave Himself to die for our sins. We shall seek for the life of holiness through communion with Him Who said, "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." Christ shall be "made unto us" "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." We shall grow ever more and more one with our Lord. We shall be bound to Him the faster by every gift which He gives us. We shall long for Him the more as we taste of His goodness. Our will and mind will more and more agree with Him. Our face will be set more steadfastly against what He hates. And when the hour of His triumph comes, it

will be the hour of our triumph too. We shall find our place in His kingdom when He shall overthrow all that exalts itself against Him, and shall reign in every will that rejoices to submit itself to His, when "the Prince of this world" shall be "cast out" and the Prince of light and love shall reign.

XVII.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford. Lent, 1867.

Acts vii. 59.

“ Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

IF we ever set ourselves to think what it will be to die, we must feel what a tremendous trial we shall have to pass through at the hour of death. It will be a very sore thing to have to bear the pangs and sufferings of a wasting sickness, to pine away day after day, and at last, all weak, and worn, and feeble, to meet that sharp struggle in which soul and body are parted asunder. And, over and above this, we can hardly doubt that for most of us the time when we lie dying will be a time of very great distress for the soul. We must almost expect to be assaulted then by fears, and doubts, and temptations of a peculiar character. If ever the Evil One sets upon

us to cut us off from God, he is likely to set upon us then with all his force and craft. He will know that his time is short, and he will try to make sure of our souls before the sand of life is run out. We shall have to do battle with him in a deadly conflict. And so we feel that our last moments in this world will be moments of tremendous trial. We are right. But, my brethren, do we feel that the first moment after death, the first moment in the next world, the first moment when we have closed our eyes on all that we are used to in this world, the first moment when we have opened the eyes of the soul on all that is new, and strange, and unknown, will be more tremendous still? If we do not in some degree realise how amazing and awful that moment will be, we shall hardly see the need of believing in the power that our Blessed Lord has to aid the soul which has passed away from the world.

Let me ask you, then, to begin to-night by trying to master the thought of a soul passing away from this world. And first, to aid you in this, take the case of St. Stephen, whose last dying moments are described in the history from which the text is taken. What do we think of as we read that story of the first martyr's death, sketched for us by St. Luke with the power as of a painter, so as to call up the whole scene vividly before us? We seem to see, perhaps,

the raging crowd, gathering in fierceness round their intended victim. With one mad onslaught they rush upon him and hurl their stones at him. The very violence with which they hurl stone after stone seems to be at once a relief to their pent-up fury and also to lash them into a fiercer cruelty. And there is St. Stephen, in the midst of those who are venting their rage upon him, wherever he turns meeting the glare of that rage, not a friend near to comfort or aid him, mangled and wounded as blow follows blow. And then we hear him call upon our Blessed Lord, and we think in wonder of the steadfast faith which made him see and feel how near our Blessed Lord was to him. He seems to forget all else—the cries, the blows, the noise, the fierceness. His gaze, his heart, his soul is fixed on our Blessed Lord, as if he were alone with Him; and so he speaks to Him, and says, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” It is indeed a wonderful faith of which we have the history here. It shows us the soul of the suffering disciple leaning on the Lord Who had suffered. We see that the secret of strength in all trials lies in appealing to the love and power of the Blessed Jesus. In the death-struggle St. Stephen had faith to hang upon his Lord, and his Lord bore him through the agonies of that hour. This is what we are most likely to think of in reading of the martyr’s death. But was this the

greatest proof of St. Stephen's faith? Was his greatest trial in this world? Did it not lie beyond this world? The life was nearly crushed out of him. The pains of death were coming thick and fast upon him. But was death the end? What was awaiting him after death? He was entering on the unseen state. All was dim, unknown, untried before him. He must have felt as if his whole being was giving way, as if there were no ground beneath his feet, as if he were sinking into a fathomless abyss. He was going—but whither? And, if he was passing into the world of spirits, would he be safe from all enemies there? We think of his falling asleep, and it soothes us to read the words. We feel that the pelting of the bloody storm of stones ceased at last, and that the spirit of the martyr had left his enemies behind. They had killed the body, and they had no more that they could do. But were there not fiercer enemies that were not left behind? Had Satan and his angels lost all power over that spirit? Could the dying martyr be sure that he should escape from these? And then, once more, if his spirit passed away, to whom would it go? It must return to God, Who gave it. It must go before God, meet Him, and give up its account to Him. It is such thoughts as these which add so wonderful a power and force to those words, “‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ I know not

where I go ; all nature seems to open out into vast untried depths beneath me ; take me, hold me in Thine everlasting arms ; I am safe with Thee. I know not who may attack me, how the powers of evil may gather against me ; take me, guard me. I know not how to meet the Judgment. I know only that I have been dear to Thee in this life. Thou hast loved me, died for me, kept me. Take me now ; to Thee do I commit my cause ; ‘ Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ ” Here is indeed a strange, calm faith in the power of our Blessed Lord to keep and bless the soul in that unseen world. One who could speak thus must have felt that our Lord had conquered in that world, as in this, and emptied it of its horrors. He looked, as it were, through the mist and darkness that was gathering around him ; he pierced with the steady gaze of his mind through the veil that was drawn between him and the state on which he was entering, and there he saw his Lord waiting and ready for him. Or rather, with a surer faith, though he did not see, he felt certain that our Lord was King in that realm of the departed, and he was ready to pass into it, because he knew that our Lord had power to keep and uphold him there. Ah, brethren, perhaps we shall never know the full force of those calm words of St. Stephen till we are on the edge of that unseen world ourselves.

And now the next thing I would ask you to do is to try and bring before yourselves the peculiar trial of passing into the unseen world. We can only try to imagine it, but it may be of use to us to make the effort.

Take, then, such points as these :

I. The moment will come when your soul will leave the body. There are two moments before you, in the first of which you will be still in this world, in the second of which you will have passed out of the world. This we all know well. But do we know no more than this? We cannot see into the world of spirits, but our Lord can. All souls live under His eye, whether they are in the body or out of the body. And He has given us the history of two departed souls. He tells us how the soul of the beggar Lazarus, immediately after death, was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom, and there was soothed and comforted after the sufferings of the world were passed. He tells us also of the wretched soul of the rich man, and of the torments into which it was cast. Between the two a great gulph was fixed. One was in misery, the other was in peace. Their state was settled, as it could only be settled, by some secret judgment of God. Our Lord speaks of both these men as living still in the spirit, thinking, feeling, using their powers and energies. One knew the comforts

with which he was visited. The other knew the torments to which he had been condemned. And both had memories of the past. One could look back upon the sorrows from which he had been released. The other could look back upon the sins which had brought him to the "place of torment."

We have the histories of two other souls given to us in Holy Scripture. We are told of the wretched Judas in words pregnant with a terrible meaning, that "he went to his own place." We are told of the penitent thief that it was promised to him that on the very day on which he died he should be with our Blessed Lord in Paradise. And so we may gather what will be the case with each one of us when we die. Each of us will go to his own place, as God shall appoint, and fix that place for us. And, if this be so, then, one by one, we shall have to pass under the sentence of God. My brethren, try and think what the effect upon us of that one moment will be. Will it not seem like an age? How will all our past days and hours be crowded into that moment, as we live them over again in memory—no, not in memory, but in one clear, vivid present! And then, bear in mind, that all outward things will be shut out from us. The sights and sounds of this world will have been left behind. In our present state a thousand things carry away our thoughts from ourselves. We are always forgetting

ourselves in what others do or say. The mind wanders off to this thing or that, and finds relief in change. But in that moment the whole powers of the mind will be turned inwards, and bent upon itself. There will be not a word, not a whisper, not a sound, not a motion to distract it from itself. It will be alone. And yet, again, in one sense it will not be alone. The soul will feel that it is before God. Yes, we—let us speak plainly, that we may realise what it is that we shall have to pass through—we shall feel that we are alone with God. We shall feel that we are under His gaze, His piercing, searching gaze, and that He is reading us through and through. He will see us ; we shall feel that He sees us. And in some sense we shall see Him. We shall probably know what He is, as we have never known it before. We shall have such a notion as a creature may have of His pure, spotless holiness, of His bright and glorious perfection. And, with this, what must come but a sense of the abomination of sin in His sight? We have heard that “He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity” ; we shall know then what this means, when we are alone with Him, shut in from all created beings, face to face with His purity, in the moment when He has required our souls of us. What will our life look like to Him then? And what will it look like to us? There may be a hundred faults which we

have made ourselves easy about, because they are so common, or because it is the way of the world to excuse them. Alas, such excuses will shrivel like tow before the fire, when we have to face the consuming brightness of the holiness of God ! What are those faults to Him ? What will He think of the ease, the carelessness, the forgetfulness of Him, the ingratitude with which we have committed them, and committed them again and again ? What shall we think of having grieved Him by each separate sin that we once made so light of ? We shall see clearly then what we know even now, if we would stop to consider it, that by each bad act which we do we scorn the love of God ; by each bad word which we speak we affront His listening ear, by each bad thought which we indulge we thrust our foulness upon His sorrowing eye. What shall we feel when all this comes vividly before us ? And, then, add to this, what will be perhaps the most overwhelming feeling, the remembrance of all that God has been to us, and all that He has done for us. Imagine this bursting upon us. Imagine God revealing to us all the whole history of His acts of love towards us, so that we see at a glance every grace that He has ever given us, all His calls, and warnings and invitations, His lessons, His drawing of our hearts to Him, His devices and plans to win us, His many thousand aids bestowed on

us ; and so our wakening up to all that we might have been, and to all that we are ; our seeing clearly all His vast love, and all our ingenuity in thwarting His purposes. Ah, my brethren, think deeply of all this, and you will see that the moment in which the soul passes before God is the most tremendous of all moments.

2. But have we any reason to suppose that what the soul feels and knows about itself in that moment will pass away and be forgotten? Surely all that we know about our own powers, and all that we know about the love of God would lead us to believe that the memory of that meeting with God would live on in the soul, and work most powerfully upon it for good. Probably we ourselves, even now, rarely or never forget altogether what has settled down in our minds. At any rate, it is strange to see how a slight circumstance will bring before us things which have happened long years ago in all their most minute particularity, when we fancied that we had forgotten them. And certainly, when God calls, and warns, and teaches us, He does not mean that we should forget His revelation. It is part of our misery in this world that so many things for a while cover over and hide what He writes with His finger on the soul, as dust gathers over an inscription until it cannot be read. In the unseen world there will be nothing to

turn away the mind from the thought of God and of itself. Surely, then, the vision of God will live on in us. The sight which we have of Him in that moment when we pass beyond all the distractions of the world, to see nothing but Him, will be stamped upon our spirits. And the sight which we had of ourselves, in our own true, real character, as shown to us by God, with all our past sins, faults, failings, imperfections, and corruption, will remain fixed there also.

3. But will not this be torture, and misery, and wretchedness to the soul? No; for it will not be alone in that state of the departed. Our Blessed Lord will be present there. He has taken possession of that realm. He has made it His own. He blessed it with His visible presence when He descended into hell. He claimed for His Own soul, as man, the guardian care, the comforts, the support, the presence of God with the departed, when He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." He assured the same protection and the same comforts of God, of which He tasted Himself, to us, who are the members of His body; for all which He took for Himself as the Head, He took that we might share it with Him. He has claimed as part of His kingdom that abode of souls; for, when the penitent thief asked to be remembered by Him when He came into His kingdom, He answered, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in

Paradise"—this very day thou shalt know what it is to be with Me, to feel Me near thee, guiding, teaching, comforting, assuring thee that thou art Mine for ever. There is a mysterious passage which seems to tell us how He Himself bore revelations of His love and mercy to the spirits of those in that unseen world: "The Gospel was preached to them that are dead." And so, doubtless, He reveals Himself to them still. The manner of His presence with the departed may not be the same as when His soul was amongst them, while His body lay in the grave, but we need not doubt that He is there present still. The manner of His presence with us on earth is different from what it was when He was seen by men in the flesh, but we know that He is with us even to the end of the world. And so we cannot but believe that He is still present with the departed, and puts forth His power and Love to bless them. Nay, He seems Himself to claim this power over the place of departed spirits as part of the special fruits of His Own victory over death when He says, "I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the Keys of Hell and of Death."

Pause here, then, and imagine what must be the effect of that presence of our Blessed Lord upon the departed spirits. As the sight of their past sins broods upon their minds, how may we believe that He

makes them hate and abhor their old pollution ! As the knowledge of the purity of God sinks down into their being, and its beauty and fairness grows upon them, how must He make that knowledge work in them, till they crave and long to be made more and more pure themselves ! As the memory of all God's wondrous love to them melts and entrances them more and more, how must our Lord give force to that memory, and so quicken their longings to be brought nearer and nearer to the very presence of God unveiled in heaven ! We may well trust that in His conquering power our Lord will thus overrule all that might hurt the soul, and turn it into a gain. We may perhaps even venture to use His words by the Prophet Hosea, as though they were spoken to the spirit before the full and final triumph of the resurrection hour has arrived : " I will ransom thee from the power of the grave ; I will redeem thee from death. O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

4. But this is not all which we may say of the power of our Lord in the world of departed spirits. There must be blessings and gifts which He bestows upon the spirits there far beyond those which He gives here. So great are those blessings that St. Paul longed to depart and to be with our Lord. The apostle had seen our Lord in glory while He was in this

world. He had had abundant revelations from Him. He had heard His voice. He had felt the strength of our Lord working in him so powerfully that it overcame his own weakness. He had even learnt to rejoice in suffering, because it gave an opportunity for our Lord to show how near He was to His disciple. So closely was he bound to our Lord that he says that he lived by the life of Christ. And yet he felt that after death our Blessed Lord would be still nearer to him, and he would be still nearer to our Lord. There was greater joy and happiness in store for him when he should be set free from this world. Can we not guess how this would be? Think only how all that is in the world comes between us and our Lord, and draws away our hearts from Him, or threatens to fill our hearts and leave no room for Him to work in them. The grace of Christ works within us. What should we be if it did not? But we live in the midst of coldness and carelessness, which check the love of God in us. The frost of the world chills the soul, and keeps it from putting out in full beauty the fruits of the Spirit. What a gain, then, must it be to depart from this world, and to be taken into that nearer Presence of our Lord, where He shall foster and cherish the soul, while there will be nothing to interfere any longer with His loving influence over it! There must be

times in the lives of nearly all of us when the sore struggle against temptation, or the sharpness of the conflict in standing out against the bad example of those around us, or the weight of the sorrows of life, or the very comforts of grace with which God blesses us now, make us turn our longing eyes towards the peace, and calm, and safety of Paradise. We are ready to cry out with St. Paul, "I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ;" "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away" from the strife, and din, and stress, and weariness of the battle of life, "and be at rest." Even before our appointed hour has come, when the storm of a great trial is pelting ceaselessly upon us, we are tempted to cry out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit; oh, take me, and gather me unto Thyself. Hide me secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues!" So do we long to be sheltered and soothed by Him.

And will not this very longing of our hearts suggest to us how He will deal with the faithful soul when He has at last taken it to Himself? How will he calm, and soothe, and refresh it after the trials of life! "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours." When the souls under the altar cry out, there are given unto them white robes. How full of promise to all that have suffered in faith and patience

in this life are those words which our Lord spoke of the soul of Lazarus: "Now he is comforted!" He received evil things in this life, but now he is comforted. How do they seem to tell us of our Blessed Lord watching those who love Him in their sorrows and sufferings here below, and waiting to bless them, when the trial hour shall be past! Surely His eye marks every pang we bear for His sake, every struggle we make to do His will, every faintness of our worn spirit as the battle bears down hard upon us. He marks, He remembers them all; and He will comfort us in His Own good time. As a mother takes up her child after a night of agony, and folds it in her arms and soothes it, so our Lord will take up our spirits when the sufferings of life are past, and calm and still every throb of anguish in them. Yes, when He calls us from this world, it is as though He spoke His own old words that have cheered us so often, only with a deeper, fuller meaning: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

But even rest and calm are not all that we shall gain from being with Him in that unseen world. How could it be? If our Blessed Lord is in some sense nearer to the soul there even than He is here, so that St. Stephen could ask Him to take his spirit to Himself, and St. Paul could speak of his being

more with Christ after he had departed from this world, then that Presence must help to change, to influence, to purify the soul. What must it be to be brought in any way nearer to Him, to know more of Him, of His wisdom, of His holiness, of His purity, of His tenderness, of His love. We cannot live in constant intercourse with a wise and holy friend without feeling the force of his character and example. He lifts and raises us out of and above ourselves. His presence keeps down what is evil in us ; it draws out all the better parts of our nature. How much more will the presence of our Lord so act upon us ! Even in this world, St. Paul teaches us that, by “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” If this be so here, where there is still so much to distract, who can venture even to guess what may be the power of the Presence of Christ to work upon the soul in that world where it is gathered into a place of secluded secrecy from which every evil influence is banished ? How will our Lord Himself, Who began the good work in the soul, perform and carry it on until His day ! * How will He make it more and more like Himself in love, and purity, and perfection !

These, then, are the victories of our Blessed Lord in the valley of the shadow of death. He has made

* Philippians i. 6.

that place of separation a safe and calm resting-place, and a school of preparation for the glory of Heaven.* He has received the souls that enter Paradise to Himself. They are in His hand. They are "absent from the body," and "present with the Lord." He guards, guides, and sustains them. He has turned their sad memories of the past into blessed and healing lessons of the hateful nature of sin. He quickens their longings after God, and meets those longings with fresh consolation. He soothes them after the trials of life. He visits them, and blesses them with His Presence, and so leads them onwards to the day of their perfected joy at the Resurrection. And thus He shows Himself to be the Lord both of the dead and of the living. On Him all souls hang, in the body or out of the body. He is the Strength, and Hope, and Life of all.

And now, dear brethren, one great lesson rises out of all that has been said. If God has given us but little clear knowledge of that state of the departed, if we have been obliged to guess at what passes in that

* Dr. Newman, in a sermon preached at Oxford, describes the state of the departed as "a school-time of contemplation, as this world is a discipline of active service." A Lutheran writer, Martensen, speaks of the same state as a "kingdom of calm thought, and self-fathoming, of remembrance." He calls it "that cloister-like, that monastic, or conventual world." The similarity of thought between these two writers is very remarkable.

state, and are not able to speak with absolute certainty, one thing at least is clear and certain. Every hope of the soul as it passes from the body centres in our blessed Lord. If, therefore, He is to be our hope and stay after death, He must be our hope and stay now. We must live in close, earnest, true communion with Him. We must live with Him as our Friend and Guide, our heart's inmost life. If we wish to feel that we can commit ourselves to Him, and lean upon Him, when our spirits shall have to venture forth at His call into the dim, uncertain, untried world beyond the grave, then we must familiarise ourselves now with His love, His power, His gifts, His might. If we hope to say with the calm, undoubting trust of St. Stephen, at that last moment, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," then we must learn such trust beforehand by commending our spirits to Him now. Aim at this, then. Dwell on the greatness of that love which made our Lord die for us. Dwell on that thought during this Lent, when your sins rise up against you and accuse you. See how He died for us while we were yet sinners. So, when you have to go, all sinful as you are, to find your sins coming back upon your mind in that tremendous moment when you come to appear before the Presence of God, you will have learnt to lean on the atoning power of the Cross of your Lord. Let it be often your prayer now,

“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” “Stained as my soul is, take it, count it as Thine Own, cleanse it, offer it to God to be accepted through Thee.” Make the same prayer, the same offering of yourselves to your Lord in all the dangers of life. As any fierce temptation bears up against you, fly to Him for shelter and safety, with the words, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit ; keep it, shield it, hold it, lest it be torn away from Thee.” As the hosts of the Evil One assault you, lift up the same cry for help. In acts of faith, yield up your souls to the Lord. In acts of self-denial, and self-sacrifice, separate your souls from all else that may interfere with your love of Him, and give to Him, to Him only the right over them. In acts of love, choose Him, bind yourselves to Him, fasten your affections on Him. In acts of pain and suffering, lay yourselves out, as it were, to be nailed to the cross by Him, and leave yourselves in His hands. Above all, in acts of communion offer up your souls to Him, ask Him to come and take possession of them : “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, make it Thine Own, work in it, bind it to Thyself, unite it, make it one with Thee.”

So you will find out more and more what He can do, what He can be to the soul. As you live with Him, you will be able to die with Him. As all through life you will have found His love come out the more

as the trial was the greater, so in that most tremendous trial, when you are on the borders of the unseen world, you will look for a greater love still. You will feel, "He has been there in that world before me ; He is there in power now ; He has the keys of hell and of death ; I am not going out of the borders of His kingdom ; nor where His love cannot bless ; no, but nearer, nearer to Him ; Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. ' Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.' ' I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.' "

XVIII.

OUR HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP.

Preached in the Church of St. Giles, Graffham, on the twenty-third Sunday after Trinity, 1857.

Philippians iii. 20.

“Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“WE look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” He Who is in the midst of us now, but unseen, shall one day show Himself openly to us. “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven.” He Who now sits at the right hand of the Father, and there displays His glory and majesty, rejoicing the angels with the light of His countenance, shall at last in like manner fill all His faithful servants on earth with gladness by His appearance. For the present there is a veil between us and our Blessed Lord. By faith we see Him amongst us, but we cannot see Him with the eye of the body. As surely as His Own word is true, He is alway with us, even unto the end of the

world. He is present with His Church, and with every faithful member of it. He is present in every act of His Church, and of the ministers whom He has appointed. At every Baptism Christ is there. Though outwardly Jesus baptizes not, but His disciples, yet in reality it is He Who cleanses the soul by the washing of water with the word. It is He Who then joins, and knits, and takes us into Himself. It is He Who makes us partakers of His Own Divine nature, that He may change us from sin to holiness. At every Confirmation Christ is amongst us ; and, as the hands of the Bishop are laid upon our heads to bless us in the Saviour's Name, the Saviour Himself spreads over us those Hands which were once pierced on the Cross for us, that we may receive fresh strength from Him to do God's will. At every gathering together for Public Prayer in church Christ is amongst us, and our hymns and chants of praise, our cries for pardon and help are heard on high, because they are presented by One Who is "worthy to be heard." At every Celebration of the Holy Communion Christ is amongst us, to plead for us and with us that great and precious Sacrifice of Himself upon the Cross, which taketh away the sins of the world. The earthly priest, who stands and ministers at the altar, is a representative, not of an absent, but of a present God. The earthly priest is but the mouthpiece by which

the whole fellowship of Christians, the Body of Christ, gives utterance to that faith by which it casts itself for forgiveness and grace upon the great atonement made by its Divine Head. Rather, to state the truth more awfully, the priest is the mouthpiece by which on earth Christ Himself lays before His Father that prevailing Offering of Himself which is the Source of all pardon and grace, and in virtue of which He presents His Church to serve the Father as His accepted and beloved children. And, as Christ is present at the Holy Communion as our only Priest and continual Sacrifice, so is He also present to feed with His Own Body and Blood the souls of all who come to Him faithfully.

Thus, even now, even in this life of trial, our Lord is with us at every moment. His eye is perpetually upon us. He watches every weakness, every sin and failing which afflicts us. He sees every earnest struggle we make against temptation. He hears every groan, every cry for help. He catches every sigh of sorrow we breathe. He meets us as we reach after Him, dwells with us and in us, works in us to make us purer, teaches us first to loathe the pollution of sin, then cleanses us from it ; stirs us to long to be holy, then satisfies us with the gift of holiness. He is with us as our Guide, our Strength, our Mediator and Intercessor, the Food and Refreshment of our souls.

All this our Lord is to us now, but He desires to be even more to us. He desires to be our exceeding great Reward, to bring us to be where He is, that we may behold His Glory. "In His Presence is the fulness of joy." There, where Christ is, every longing of the soul shall be satisfied, every prayer more than answered, every wish for happiness more than granted. And for this we wait. The services of this time of year invite us to cast our eyes onward. They remind us that, great as our present blessings are, there are greater things still in store for us.

Advent is drawing on, that Sacred season which teaches us to look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. The last coming of Christ begins now to dawn upon us. We are invited to lift up our heads as those who know that their "redemption draweth nigh." For the present, our life is a mixture of joy and sorrow, of rest and labour, of peace and strife. But this state of things is not to go on for ever. This fallen world is passing away, passing on to its restoration. One day all its sorrows will be over, as clouds are driven away before the wind, or darkness before the rising sun. One day all its change, and uncertainty, and disappointment will be at an end. "The times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, Which before was preached unto us, Whom

the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things."

We look for the Saviour to perfect the great work of His redeeming love ; to wipe away all tears from all eyes, to comfort those that mourn, to banish sickness, and suffering, and decay, and death, to purge out the last stains of guilt, to subdue to the law of God all the rebellions of our corrupt nature, to stablish our hearts unblamable in holiness before God and the Father. His last Advent will accomplish this for us ; and, meanwhile, if we would not lose all the gifts of glory which He will then bestow, we are to remember that "our conversation is in heaven." We are to live like those who belong to heaven, for this is what St. Paul means. When he says your "conversation is in heaven," it is the same as saying, your state is that of Citizens of Heaven ; you do not belong to this imperfect and fallen world ; your home is in the glorious Kingdom of God, the blessings which belong to that are pledged and promised to you ; your life and ways should be such as are fit for one who is a subject of such a high and holy Kingdom. Therefore, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." So the Apostle writes. Join steadfastly and earnestly with that faithful band who are following Christ, and those who speak for Him ; "for

many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ." It is with bitter sorrow that I tell you that many live like those who have thrown off all obedience and love for Christ and His Kingdom. Nay, they even fight against and oppose the spread of that Kingdom. Instead of worshipping Christ as their Lord, and devoting all their strength and energy to His service, "their god is their belly;" to pamper and indulge their bodies with eating, and drinking, and luxury, is their chief thought and care. Instead of understanding that the true glory of their nature is to be made by His grace ever more and more like Christ, to be lifted higher and higher above their mere animal passions, and, by the strength of the nature of God working within them, to grow more holy, pure, and spiritual, they "glory" in "their shame;" they make their boast of that very wild and unrestrained following of their evil lusts and desires, which lowers and degrades them into the state of beasts. Instead of raising their souls and affections above this world, and setting them where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, they "mind earthly things:" they are taken up with this world, and with what it has to give. The great thing that they set before them is to get as much of the riches, and comforts, and pleasures of this world as they can.

Their plans and schemes are laid out for this. They live, and toil, and long, and seek after this as the one thing worth having, the one thing that will satisfy their hearts and make them happy. And, therefore, the Apostle calls them "the enemies of the Cross of Christ." All such sensual, worldly, self-indulgent, slothful persons, he says, have plainly set themselves against our Blessed Lord. There are "many" of them, even among Christians, not merely among the heathen, who know not God, nor the love of God, but even among those who profess to believe in Christ, there are "many" who "walk" in these ways. I "tell you" this "weeping;" I am cut to the heart to see it; to see these men forgetting that Lord to Whom they belong; forgetting all His love in dying for them; forgetting all the precious gifts He has bestowed upon them, and making no use of them; forgetting the still greater blessings that He holds out to them. But so it is; they have turned their backs upon Him; they are the enemies of His Cross. He was lifted up upon the Cross that He might draw all men to Him, draw them from sin and rebellion in penitence back to God; and these men are giving themselves over to sin. He was crucified, that we might with Him be crucified to the world, and turn from its snares and temptations to follow Him; and these men have bound themselves

afresh to serve the world. He was crucified, that they who are His might crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts; and these men wantonly indulge those foul lusts, which they ought to have striven against, though the strife had been painful as death itself. When Christ gave Himself to die for them, He bound them to love Him, to offer themselves to be His servants, to cleave and hold fast to Him, to be witnesses of His compassion and tender love, of His purity and Holiness, of His majesty and power in the midst of a world that was rebelling against Him. And now they have broken every tie by which their Lord would have held them to Himself; they have deserted Him to go over and range themselves on the side of those who are doing their utmost to bring to nothing the work of Christ's redeeming love. Oh, "brethren," writes St. Paul, "do not fall in with this band of rebels, 'for our conversation is in heaven.' We belong to heaven, not to the world, and therefore the world's ungodly ways are not such as we can walk in. The happiness and glorious state of heaven is what we should be preparing for, and it is but throwing away our time to hunt after such things as will perish with this perishing world. The King of heaven is our King, and the rule of our life must be, not to please ourselves, but to please Him."

So far the words of the Epistle for this twenty-

third Sunday after Trinity are a solemn warning against a worldly spirit. We are to take care that this world does not so fill our hearts as to shut out from them the remembrance of that better and purer world for which we should be preparing. We are to be on our guard lest the rules, and maxims, and habits of those who make this world their all become the guides of our life, and so seduce us from the service of Christ. But we want some further direction still, for we have to live in this world. For the present, at least, it is our appointed place. God has set us here, and given us our duties in this world ; we cannot, and ought not to try and escape from them. We must be more or less mixed up with that present course of things which is called this world. We have work to do, absolutely necessary work, which seems to be altogether earthly. We have to provide for ourselves and our families, and we are commanded to do this by God Himself. By the very ordinance of God there must be labour and toil in the earning of our bread, giving and taking of wages, buying and selling, exchanging and bargaining ; and much care and forethought must, of course, be spent on these matters. Moreover, we stand in such relation to each other, that the time of many of us must be much occupied in the bringing up of children, and teaching them such things as appear only to be fitting them

for taking their place in this world ; or, again, in making laws for the government of the country, or arranging disputes and mistakes about the possession of property. As parents or children, masters or servants, governors or governed, manufacturers or mechanics, a very large portion of our days, and a great deal of anxiety, is bestowed upon what concerns this world.

Suppose, then, that a Christian, who feels that he is a citizen of heaven and a subject of Christ, and that his life should therefore be a heavenly one and his heart devoted entirely to his Lord and Saviour—suppose that such a person is anxious to know how far it is right or safe for him to engage in worldly pursuits, to look after worldly gains, or to take his part in the amusements and recreations of society, how shall we answer him or give him any guidance ? He may take his lesson from the Gospel of to-day. We read there that the Pharisees and the Herodians asked our Blessed Lord whether it was “lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar or not ?” By this question they meant to “entangle Him in His talk ;” and they thought that they had so framed it, that whatever answer He gave they would be able to find matter of accusation against Him. If He said that it was not right to give tribute unto Cæsar, then they might accuse Him to the Roman Governor of resisting the authority of Cæsar. If He said that it was right to

pay the tribute, this would be the same as saying that the Romans were the proper governors of the Jews, and so our Lord would give up His own claim to be the great King, Saviour, and Deliverer of their nation. Thus they pretended that they were troubled by a point of conscience, and wanted to have their doubts relieved. "What are we to do? are we to obey Cæsar, or are we to obey God?" Observe how our Lord answers them. He "perceived their wickedness." His eye could read their hearts, and see plainly that this pretended desire to find out what was right was only a deceit. So He said, "Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites? Show Me the tribute money." And they brought unto Him a penny. And He saith unto them, "Whose is this image and superscription?" Whose likeness and name is this which the coin bears upon it? "They say unto Him, 'Cæsar's.'" See, then, our Lord means, the very money which you use shows that you acknowledge Cæsar to be your prince, and your duty is simple and plain enough. Treat him as your prince, and pay him the taxes which are due to him. "Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's—and unto God the things that are God's." Your fit and proper duties to your earthly governor need never for a moment interfere with your duties to God. Keep well and plainly before your minds that you owe

worship, obedience, love, and service to God above and before every one else. Be sure that you do not rob Him of what is due to Him. Never let your obedience to your earthly ruler lead you into a sin against the King of heaven and earth. Make this your fixed and certain rule, and you need not be afraid that you will be doing wrong in showing all proper submission to the governor under whom you are placed by the will of God.

Now let us apply this same principle to the case of one who wishes to know how far he may give himself up to the occupations and pleasures of the world without being false to God. Let us say to him, "Render" to the world the things that are the world's, "and to God the things that are God's." Many things you owe to the world, to those that live with you and around you, to the fulfilment of your duty in the position which God has given you. Those things you must pay. Attention to your business, care of your household and family, kindness and courtesy to your equals, submission, respect, and cheerful obedience to those set over you, all such service as may be required of you for the good of your country ; these are debts which you are bound to pay. We may go further, and say that you ought also to encourage all such friendly intercourse with your neighbours, all such meetings for recreation and

amusement as tend to keep up feelings of kindness and brotherhood between men. Such things are often high duties. No doubt, there are some to whom it may be more soothing to lead a retired life of study or to enjoy the calm quiet of home. In some respects it is certainly more safe to do so, though this kind of retirement has its great and special dangers and temptations. But, be it ever so safe or ever so pleasant, we were not sent into this world to live for ourselves, to do that which seems to be most for our own peace, to consult only for our own salvation. No ; we are to do good to others also. Therefore it is a false, and low, and unworthy following of our Master, who went about doing good (even though it brought suffering, and reproach, and disappointment upon Him) to hold aloof from the world and refuse to take our part in that round of offices which God has given us to perform. Render to the world the things that are the world's. You will very likely find some advisers who will tell you to have nothing to do with the amusements and business of the world, to keep aloof from them altogether. And this seems to be the simplest way of escaping the difficulties which beset us in society. It has, moreover, an appearance of greater devotion to God, just as the Pharisees seemed to be more zealous for God when they said, " Have nothing to do with Cæsar, pay him no tribute.

It is against the honour of God to acknowledge Cæsar as our master." But, for all that, it is not right for us to act upon such advice, at any rate, not for the greater part of us, whatever special calls some of us may have. It was the will of our Lord, Whose choice was that of the greatest love and the truest wisdom, not to remove us from those trials and difficulties that surround us. On the very night before His death when He was committing His Church to the Father's care, His prayer for us was: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

These very words, however, you will see, show that there is "evil" in the world, that there is in it much to corrupt, and pervert, and destroy our souls. Undoubtedly there is. The Bible is full of warnings against it. And, while we are rendering to the world the duties which we owe to it, how are we to know whether it is having a bad effect on us? Let us take the last part of our Lord's answer to the Pharisees and Herodians, and it will guide us: "Render unto God the things which are God's." If the world leads you to rob God of what belongs to Him, then it is indeed corrupting you, and you must beware of it. Your Heart, for instance, belongs to God. If the world so fills your heart that you care more for pleasure, wealth, comfort, luxury, the praise of men, than you do

for serving and obeying God, then you are rendering to the world what belongs to God. Your Time belongs to God. If you allow yourself to be so taken up with business, with family cares, with society, with reading or working, or loitering and idling, that you forget God and the presence of God, and give up or shorten your prayers, and stay away from Church, and neglect to read and hear God's word, then you are rendering to the world what belongs to God. Your Money belongs to God. If you toil and strive to grow rich for the sake only of having plenty of money, either to hoard up or to spend upon yourself, instead of using your money to do good to others, and to promote the glory of God, then you are rendering to the world what belongs to God. Your Health and Strength belong to God. If you waste these by late hours, by exciting kinds of dissipation, by excess in eating and drinking, if you do things which lower the tone of your body and mind, making you feverish, nervous, feeble, and unable calmly and quietly to pray, and read, and meditate, and examine yourself, or unprepared to receive the Holy Communion, then, again, you are rendering to the world what belongs to God. Your Learning, your Powers of Conversation, your Accomplishments belong to God. If you make these minister to vanity, if you use them to get praised and thought much of by men, instead of using

them for the greater happiness of those amongst whom you move, and for the honour of God Who lent you these talents to use in His service, then you are rendering to the world what belongs to God.

In short, brethren, the lessons we learn to-day are these: to live in this world as those who belong to a higher and more glorious one; to live on earth as if earth were heaven; to behave as those who know that, through the Incarnation and atoning Passion of Christ, heaven and earth are one, and that the baptized members of Christ's Church are one great and holy family together with those pure spirits of just men made perfect who have passed to their rest and with the angels; to speak, and think, and act, as those who know that they are the subjects of the King of Heaven, Whose Eye is ever on them, and Whose work they may be doing every moment. This is to have our conversation in heaven. And, to live this life, we find that we need not do strange or uncommon things; we need not go out from our brethren, nor separate ourselves from the doings and employments of the world. No; the secret of a heavenly life on earth is to do the common every-day works of ordinary men, but to do them in an uncommon spirit, to do them in a spirit of intense and continual devotion to God; whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God.

Parents are to teach their children that they may be fitted to do what God shall call them to. Masters are to rule their households as if they were looking after souls put into their charge by God. Servants are to do their work heartily, not with eye service as men pleasers, but as unto the Lord. Men of business, merchants, tradesmen are to set themselves to gather wealth, that they may have more to spend for God. Kings and those in authority are to govern so as to encourage peace, order, and religion. Every power of body or mind, every advantage we possess, our rank and place, our name and station, our influence over others, the charm of winning manners, skill in any art (be it music, or painting, or any other), the gift of noble birth, or situations of authority, all these are to be rendered unto God, used earnestly, honestly, sincerely, in making Him more known, loved, and obeyed.

Is this a pure and holy pattern of life to set before ourselves? Is it one that will need much striving and watching over ourselves lest we should be corrupted in this world of trial in which our lot is cast? It is indeed. But let us remember that this high and holy life is set before us because our conversation is in heaven. We, on our part, are pledged to be the faithful subjects of the King of Heaven ; but He also, on His part, is pledged to save,

and defend, and strengthen us. Therefore the collect for the week invites us to flee to Him as our "Refuge and Strength;" our "Refuge" from all dangers and assaults of the world and the Prince of the world; our "Strength" whereby we may faithfully work for Him. He is the "Author of all godliness;" and, in a firm trust in His love, we ask Him to "be ready to hear the devout prayers of His Church," and to "grant that those things which we ask faithfully we may obtain effectually." "Those things which we ask faithfully," as the true, loyal, and devoted servants of the King of heaven, who desire to spend and be spent in His service—those things which we ask, in order that God in all may be glorified, we have a firm and lively hope that we shall "obtain effectually, through Jesus Christ our Lord." We know that "He is able to subdue all things unto Himself," "the unruly wills and affections of sinful men," "the corruption that is in the world through lust," the folly and blindness that has led away so many from Him. Therefore, through all the difficulties, and troubles, and temptations which beset us, "we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." We wait for Him as for One "Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body"—Who shall change our weak souls that they may be for ever strong and steadfast in His love—Who shall change

this imperfect world into "a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," casting out from it all that rebels against Him or seduces from His service, and "putting down all rule, and authority, and power," that all things may be subject to the One King of the heavenly Jerusalem.

XIX.

ABSOLUTION.

Preached in the Church of St. Peter, Lavington, on the
twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity, 1857.

St. Matthew ix. 25, 26.

“But when the people were put forth, He went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.”

YOU wish, my brethren, to devote yourselves to God. Touched by His wondrous love to you, you would love Him in turn. As you know that He made you and made every limb and part of your body, made every power and faculty of your soul, so you would “render to God” all that is His, you would give yourselves up to serve Him to the utmost. As you know that God the Son gave Himself up to die on the Cross in His intense love for you, so you long to live unto Him Who died to save you. He offered up His sacred Body to be tortured and racked in those fearful agonies which He bore when He was nailed

to the tree of shame ; He offered up His pure and spotless soul to be darkened by those unknown sufferings which were laid on Him in His passion ; and all this to make you His Own, to set you free from guilt, from the power of sin and Satan, to redeem you, body and soul. And you are ready to offer yourselves to work and to suffer for His Name's sake. You feel that you ought to live in this world as those who belong to Him. You have learnt that your conversation is in heaven, that its courts are your proper home, that its blessed and holy inhabitants are your companions, that its laws are the rules of your lives, that its King is your Lord. Henceforth, all you do is to be done for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Your time, your strength, your talent, your money, are to be spent in doing Him honour. You are to mix in society that men may learn to love Him, and because He has given you duties to perform there. You are to be diligent in your business or occupation, because He has allotted it to you. Whatsoever you do in word or deed, you are to do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Such was the lesson which the Church brought before you last Sunday, and you wish to act upon it. If you do indeed wish this, then two things will probably—almost certainly—have struck you ; one, how very little your conversation has been in heaven in time past, how false

you have often been to your Heavenly King ; the other, how much you are likely to fail in that entire devotion of your hearts and lives to God which you confess to be your duty. For there is no doubt that it is far from easy to give ourselves wholly to God ; to live always as if we felt His Eye upon us, to speak as if His Ear caught all our words, to behave as if He were One in every company in which we move, to remember Him in all hours of light conversation, in times of excitement and honourable rivalry, such as the best men may be exposed to, to feel that He stands over us in the midst of the crowd of pleasure-hunters, that He is a witness of every bargain we make, that He watches every scheme we plan, that He is by our side in the lonely walk, and in the silent chamber ; all this is very hard. And so it is very hard to train ourselves to serve Him with hand and tongue, with head and heart, to do our common business, and join in our common amusements, and yet not only not to forget God, but to strive to please Him. This world is full of snares to draw away our affections from Him. A thousand matters are always ready to take up the place in our souls which He ought to fill. Can we hope to escape all these temptations ? And, if not, what is to become of us ? We shall be lost to God, cut off from Him, and shall die in sin.

Such are the dangers that are round about us,

dangers both real and true, such as we shall do well to think of deeply, for they threaten us with everlasting destruction. Some of us perhaps at this very moment are dead to God, dead to all love for Him, and faith in Him, dead to all zeal and activity in His service. Others of us may feel that the bad influences of the world are so stifling and choking the energy of love and faith within them, that they know not how soon the Spirit may be altogether quenched, and God's grace have perished in them. Are there, then, any means for restoring a soul that has been thus almost, or altogether, cut off from God? There are ; and one of these means of restoration is brought before us in the services of this Sunday, namely, that Absolution and Remission of sins which God has given power and commandment to His ministers to declare and pronounce to such of His people as are penitent.

Look at the history of the raising of Jairus's daughter. Hers was not the more common case of one who was suffering from sickness. Every sickness, and every disease among the people our Lord had healed. But here was one who might perhaps have been thought to be beyond the reach of His compassion and might, ready as they were for all who called upon Him. Sickness had so far done its work upon her, that she was at the point of death when her father left her, as St. Mark tells us. St. Matthew, describing

rather what the father expected than his actual words, says that she was "even now dead." Yet her father prays for her. When he saw Jesus, "he fell at His feet, and besought Him greatly, saying, 'My little daughter lieth at the point of death ; I pray Thee come and lay Thy Hands on her, that she may be healed ; and she shall live.'" Observe the words, "she lieth at the point of death ;" so near to it, that it is not to be thought that I shall see her again alive, yet even from death itself Thou canst restore her, "I pray Thee come !" Observe, again, the manner in which Jairus hopes that his child will be restored ; "Lay Thy Hands on her, and she shall live." It was the touch of the Hand of our Blessed Lord which was to work this wonder.

The prayer of the father was not in vain. "Jesus arose, and followed him." "And when He came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, He said unto them, 'Give place ; for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth.'" There is no need for hopeless and bitter lamentation here ; the child is not utterly perished. "And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead." To their eyes, she was indeed lost beyond all remedy. Nothing that man could do would bring life into her. Therefore they mocked at Him Who told them that she was only asleep, as if they did not

know what death was. But "He put them all out, and went in."

What a strange and mysterious sight must that have been for the few witnesses whom He had chosen : the father and the mother of the damsel, and the three disciples, St. Peter, St. James, and St. John whom He had thus made partakers with Him in the miracle ! There, in that still, quiet chamber, where all sounds of weeping and lamentation were now hushed, the Lord Jesus stood over the corpse of this young girl. Face to face were met together, life and death, God by whom all things were made, and the works of His hands ruined and defaced. As the eye of the Saviour fell with love and pity on that pale face and stiffened form that lay stretched out before Him, He was gazing on the outward sign of that sad punishment which man had brought upon himself by his disobedience. That dead child was the victim of sin ; and He was the Redeemer Who had come to set the world free from the misery, and decay, and corruption which were the fruits of sin. His Own human nature, joined as it was to the Divine nature, was pure, spotless, and full of virtue. Her nature was struck by that fatal blight with which the fall of man had cursed it. In Him was life, the very fountain-head, and well-spring of life, for He was that "second Adam Who is a quickening Spirit," able to give life

to "whom He will." And so He stood over that dead child, took her by the hand, and the maid arose. He touched her, and in that touch the power of God and the weakness of mortal nature met together, and the weakness was turned into new-born strength. In that touch, the chains with which guilt had bound her dropped from her, as bands of tow shrivel before a consuming fire. In that touch, life poured into her; and death, with its corrupting power, was driven forth.

Now, what does this show us? That there was no suffering, not even the very worst, from which our Lord had not power to deliver. And further, when we find Him working so many of His miracles in one uniform way, when He touches the blind, and they receive their sight, when He touches the deaf, and their ears are opened, touches the dumb, and the string of his tongue is loosed, touches the leper, and the foulness of his disease is cleansed away, touches the dead, and life comes back,—what would He teach us? That it is through His Human nature, through that nature which He shares with us, that the Power of His Godhead works to heal and restore. It is through His sacred Body, that the virtue of God manifest in the flesh goes forth to cure those evils which sin has brought upon us.

But may we go no further? Surely we may. All

the great teachers of the Catholic Church have taken the sicknesses of the body to be types of the sicknesses of the soul, and the death of the body to be a type of the death of the soul ; and in this they have only followed the teaching of Holy Scripture itself. Therefore we gather from this miracle that our Lord can not only "open our eyes to see the wondrous things of His law," "unstop our ears that we may hear the voice of God and follow Him," "make us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us," when our "whole head is sick, and our whole heart faint," but that, even when we are "dead in trespasses and sins," He can quicken, or give us new life. Even when we are most lost, there is a means of restoration open to us. Even when death has seized upon our souls, if we can be brought under the shadow of His sacred Hand, we may live again.

But how can that be? Our Lord has gone up on high. He has entered into heaven. He is no more to be seen amongst us. True ; but think of those gracious promises which He made to us before He was taken out of our sight. Remember what He said to His Apostles after He was risen from the dead : "Then said Jesus to them, Peace be unto you ; as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost : Whose-

soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." As the Son of man, the Lord Jesus hath power on earth to forgive sins. While He was on earth He exercised that power in His Own person. Before He ascended into heaven, He appointed the Apostles and all priests of the Church who should come after them to exercise the same power in His Name. Thus we find St. Paul exercising this office of binding men and loosing men from their sins, though he was not one of those twelve Apostles to whom the power was first committed. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians he excommunicates the man who was guilty of incest. In the second Epistle, he absolves him on his repentance, and declares that he does this in the Name of our Lord, and as His minister : " If I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the Person of Christ."

Here, then, is a most blessed means of restoration and life left for those who are dead in sin. The comfort of Absolution has been specially provided for them by the Saviour. It is thus that the Gospel is an answer to the Collect for this week. In the latter we pray, " O Lord, we beseech Thee, absolve Thy people from their offences ; that, through Thy bountiful goodness, we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins which, by our frailty, we have committed."

We know well that, in the midst of this evil and seducing world, we have offended Thee again and again. Far from living as if we were devoted to Thy service, through our weakness and folly, we have given ourselves over to the service of sin ; and now it holds us as with the grasp of death. But we beseech Thee, absolve, loose us ! Yes ; the Gospel says : “ There is One Who can restore you : go to the ministers of Christ. Go to them and you shall go to Him, for He is with them alway, even to the end of the world : go and confess your sins. Go and mourn over the offences that have separated you from God, and Christ shall lay His Hands upon you, and you shall live. As the voice of the servant looses you and declares that your sins are forgiven, the Master Himself will loose and forgive you in heaven.”

We will conclude with two points, which I ask you earnestly to consider. First, do you ever confess your sins to a priest, and seek absolution for them ? I put the question thus plainly to you, because it is one which you ought to answer plainly for the good of your own souls. Private confession to a priest is not absolutely necessary for forgiveness. Certainly it is not, but is it necessary, or, to say the least, advisable for you ? There is no doubt that private confession and absolution is an ordinance specially appointed for relieving the conscience that is burdened

with the sense of any sin which it cannot otherwise remove. Can you, and ought you, to deprive yourself of it? You feel and acknowledge that the world has an evil influence over you. You find to your grief that your heart has been much drawn away from God. You know that many sins have entered into your soul to cut it off from God. If you be cut off finally from God, then all hope is gone. You wish to be at peace with Him. Well, open the Gospels, and you find that our Lord has given authority to His ministers to absolve those who are penitent. Open the Prayer-Book, and you find it inviting you to come to some minister of God's Word* and open your grief (tell him, that is to say, what you are distressed to remember that you have done against God), that you may

* The Church does not bind you to go to any particular minister for confession, not even to the Priest of your parish, but leaves you to choose for yourself such a one as you feel will best be able to minister to your soul. The words of the Priest, in instructing his parishioners how to prepare for the Holy Communion, are these : "And because it is requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience ; therefore, if there be any of you who, by this means (self-examination and confession to God alone), cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's Word, and open his grief ; that, by the ministry of God's holy word, he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness."

receive absolution. Open almost any of the books written on the subject of repentance by the great writers of the English Church, and you find that they speak of Confession and Absolution as a chief means of reconciliation to God. Perhaps you have had friends who have also recommended the practice to you. You have heard it pressed upon you in sermons. You have known those who have manifestly found strength and comfort in this ordinance. With all these voices beckoning you, as it were, to make sure of your repentance and of God's forgiveness, what have you done? No doubt, if by the means pointed out to you in the Prayer-Book you can quiet your own conscience, there is no sort of reason why you should confess your sins to any human creature; but the question you must ask yourselves is, Can you? You must be your own judges in this, but you must judge honestly.*

* Since the abuse of confession in the Church of Rome has led to the disuse of it in England, it is necessary that we bear in mind the essential difference in the doctrine of the two Churches respecting this ordinance. In the one case it is a duty to which men are compelled, in the other it is a privilege to which they are invited; in the one case it is a recapitulation of all remembered sins, in the other a statement of those particular sins from which we cannot otherwise obtain relief; in the one it is the daily food of the believer, in the other the cordial to be used for the restoring to health of souls diseased with sin. At the same time it must be borne in mind that, since the cessation of public penance and absolution, there is

Perhaps you have never sought for absolution, because you were afraid of the shame of confession, you could not bear the thought of telling out your sins within the hearing of man. But surely it is far better to acknowledge your own sins now with a willing shame and sorrow, and to hear the blessed sentence of God's forgiveness, than to have them made known before men and angels in the last day, and to be put to everlasting shame. Now shame is full of hope and healing for the soul, then it will be hopeless and full of confusion. Remember the woman that was a sinner. She did not care to hide her past shame nor her present misery from the eyes of men. They might mock her, or judge her harshly. That did not keep her back. She came in before them all, and lay down at the Feet of Jesus, and washed them with her tears, till He told her that her sins were forgiven, and bade her go in peace. Be you like her in her humiliation, that you may be like her in

almost no discipline exercised in the Church (a fact which is acknowledged and deplored in our Communion Service), and therefore there is great danger of our receiving the Body and Blood of Christ into souls that have not been fitly prepared by penitence for that Great Gift. It is for each one of us to consider whether he can take upon himself to say that he does "truly repent of his former sins," or whether it is not safer for him to make use of private confession and absolution, as part of the ministry of reconciliation, in making his peace with God.

the full and free forgiveness which was granted her. In your confession, keep before you the desire to be at peace with God. Be glad of anything that may help to humble and abase you more entirely, that may make you blush and burn with confusion at what you have done, that may urge you with the greater horror to cast away your sins, that your soul may be free for the grace of pardon to flow in, and give you life again through union with God. None can know, till they have tried it, how a perfect and penitent confession changes the whole state of the soul towards God ; nor what a weight and burden absolution, after such confession, removes ; how strong the faith in the blessed power of the Cross to take away sins becomes ; how the love of God seems to beam upon us, and the clouds that were between us and Him to be drifted away ; how doubt, and fear, and despondency are at an end, and we are ready for a calm, and confiding, and loving service of God. The change is no less than if the Lord had laid His Hands upon us and brought us from death to life.

And this brings me to the second point which should be considered. Absolution is not an end, but a means. We come, burthened with sin, to lay down our burthen at the Saviour's Feet, that we may be set free to run the race that is set before us. We come for peace and forgiveness, that we may be ready

to do the Work of God.* The Hand of Christ is laid upon our dead soul to give it life, and that life is to be used in serving Him. It is a very common, but a very great and serious mistake, to look upon forgiveness as the completion of our salvation. Forgiveness and reconciliation with God is rather the starting-point of the Christian course, as in the case of that first full and entire remission of our sin in Holy Baptism, or it is the motive for starting with renewed energy, as in the case of Absolution. Having been forgiven, we thrill in our inmost souls with love for God Who has received us into His favour, with love for Christ Who has reconciled us by His precious death to God; and therefore we long to serve God and rejoice in pleasing Him. We are not to seek for peace with God, merely that we may rest in it as a pleasing and soothing state of mind. We are not to crave for an assurance of God's having pardoned us merely that we may fold our hands, as if, having once received that, we had got all that we wished for, and were very glad to have escaped from all spiritual toil, and strife, and trial. It is a deadly deceit of the Evil One thus to turn one of God's greatest gifts into a

* This is expressed very exactly in the Collect for the twenty-first Sunday after Trinity: "Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

snare by which he draws us away from God's service. Yet this deceit is at the root of many of the false systems of religion, and is the cause of many perversions from the truth which we see about us. We hear much on all sides of the perfect peace of mind that is to be found in this sect or in that. Enquire a little into the circumstances, and you will discover that the particular sect assures its members of salvation without the continual effort to resist sin, or to choose between right and wrong, between the faith and error, which is indeed a sore trial to us, but is nevertheless the proof of our love to God. There is a kind of hankering desire in men's hearts for ease ; just such a feeling as was once expressed to me in plain and homely words thus : " It would be such a comfort to feel that one had done enough."

My brethren, that is the last feeling that a Christian man ought to allow to rest in his heart. We never can have done enough for God, enough to show our love for Him Who spared us when we had rebelled against Him, came to seek us when we were lost, died to redeem us, took upon Himself the punishment of our offences, purchased forgiveness for us by shedding His Own Blood. Every day, every moment of our life spent in labouring to do His Will, every power of our soul and body employed in work for Him, would be as nothing to repay Him for His priceless mercies to

us. The man who has a real and deep sense of God's goodness in pardoning him will say, "How can I ever do enough to show my thankfulness to God? For Christ's sake He has accepted and taken me again into His love and favour, now then let me 'yield' myself 'unto' Him, as one that is 'alive from the dead.' Poor and unworthy as my best efforts to serve Him are, it is a joy and comfort to me to know that He will watch them with favour. I will set myself to make Him all the return in my power for His unspeakable goodness."

And this is exactly the state of heart and life which St. Paul prays in the Epistle for to-day that God would grant to the Colossian Christians. He reminds them that God "the Father" hath made "them" meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. He "hath delivered" "them from the power of darkness, and hath translated them into the Kingdom of His dear Son: in Whom we have redemption through His Blood, even the forgiveness of sins." What then? Their sins forgiven, themselves admitted into the blessed and holy family of God's saints, the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven open to them—is there nothing more for them to seek and desire? Far from it: the Apostle prays without ceasing that they may "be filled with the knowledge of the will of God in all wisdom and

spiritual understanding ;” that “they may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God ; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness.” Can there be any doubt that such ought to be the effect of the pardoning love of God upon ourselves ? Every fresh absolution, being, as it is, a fresh application of that atoning Blood which was poured out so freely for us on the Cross, ought to waken us to greater thankfulness and to warmer love for Him Who suffered for us, and for Him Who gave His only Son to be the propitiation for our sins. To walk “worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing ;” to show by our lives that we never forget the deep and wondrous compassion of our Lord ; to watch for the least thing in which we may give proof of our love, and to please Him, whether by abounding in good works, or by patiently and even joyfully bearing our Cross of trouble and suffering as He once bore His—this should be our aim. As every touch of His absolving Hand pours fresh life into our soul, and drives out the deadliness of sin, we should use the life which He gives in ministering to Him. Thus our resurrection from sin to holiness will be a witness to the world of the Saviour’s mercy and power. “The fame thereof will go abroad into all the land,” and the unbelieving will be converted unto Him.

XX.

THE FULL REWARD.

Preached on the Sunday before Advent, in the Church of St. Peter, Lavington, 1857.

Jeremiah xxiii. 5, 6.

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is His Name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

ADVENT is again close at hand. Another year with all its holy seasons has passed over our heads. The last sand in its glass is almost run out. Let us begin this day at once by thinking what use we have made of the time that is now gone from us. Have we drawn nearer to God? Have we sought His grace, and turned it to good account? Have we left off old sins, and begun to obey God in a more hearty, loving, steadfast, and unwavering manner? If there is any day in the whole year in which it is right and proper for us to consider what answer we can give to

such questions, it is this day. For now we stand, as it were, on the brink of Judgment. The past year, with all its frequent and abundant offers of grace, with all its sacred and solemn lessons, with all its opportunities for serving God, is a kind of picture of our life upon earth. How has God surrounded us with voices of warning! How has He whispered His encouragements to our inmost souls in the softest tones of mercy! What proofs of His Love has He given us! What rich gifts has He held out to us! What glorious hopes has He spread before us! At Christmas we learnt the deep love of God the Son, Who was made man for us, and were led to take notice of His bright and spotless innocence. At Circumcision we heard of Him obeying the law for us even in suffering. At Epiphany we watched Him fulfilling every holy duty of life, manifesting forth the Godhead in the perfection of His human nature. We were told that we, too, were "partakers of the Divine nature" through our union with Christ, and that we ought to show forth the indwelling of Christ by the purity of our lives. Then the Church at Septuagesima broke in upon us with a sudden and startling call, to think whether or not we had fallen from this high state of grace, and, if we had so fallen, to repent. All through Lent she taught us the duty and the blessedness of repentance. At Passion-tide she led us to the

Foot of the Cross, showed us Jesus Christ our God dying in the flesh to atone for us, bid us reflect on the greatness of our sins which nailed Him there, tried to pierce our hearts with sorrow and with love for Him Who laid down His Life for us, and comforted us by declaring to us the power of that Precious Blood to cleanse us. At Easter-tide she sought to fill us with joy in the triumph of our Lord, Who rose from His grave, conquered death, and sin, and Satan for us, and "brought life and immortality to light." On Ascension Day we saw how our Lord, both God and man, went up into heaven, and passed into the Presence of the Father to plead His Sacrifice there, to pray for us and to open a way for us into that same glory in which He dwells. At Whitsuntide we were still further strengthened by being reminded how the Blessed Comforter, God the Holy Ghost, has come down upon the Church to unite it to Christ, to take of the life that is in our Lord, and give it to the members of His Body. On Trinity Sunday the nature of the Three Divine Persons in One Godhead was revealed to us, as far as our weakness can bear such a revelation, and the very glimpse which we were allowed to catch of the outskirts of that tremendous Majesty was a pledge to us of the Will of God to bring us to a clearer knowledge and vision of Himself.

Then we were sent forth into the world to bear witness to God. We were to show our sense of His boundless Love and Goodness by behaving lovingly ourselves to those around us, by works of mercy, by fervent acts of adoration. The holiness of our lives was to force men to believe and confess that God is in us of a truth, that nothing but a power above the power of man could so transform the heart as to make it the source of such godliness. Men were to be made to see by our faithfulness in business, by our use of worldly goods, by our gentleness of behaviour, by the purity of our words and acts, that we are ruled by laws far higher than the world can make, that we are seeking a home far purer than this fallen earth, that we are the servants of a King Whose service is Divine. In short, our work in the world was to bring men to taste for themselves of the Love of God Incarnate suffering and atoning for man, subduing and conquering all the evil that afflicts man, of God dwelling in His Church, of God giving the strength and holiness that is in Himself to man, of God reconciling man to Himself, and raising him to that perfect happiness which consists in being one with Himself.

This was our mission, that which God gave us to do for Him. How is it being done? Is it being done at all? Has the history of all His acts of love and wonderful blessings been wasted upon us up to

this hour? Then at least let us rouse ourselves now. For He Himself is coming to take account with us. What if this were our last hour? What if at this moment we stood before Him? What if after this year, which is now closing, there were no more years to run? What if we had now said our last prayer; if we could never more fall down on our knees and cry, "Forgive us, Lord!" no, not even once more; if the opportunity for beginning to serve God better were altogether fled; if our souls were to be for ever and for ever what we feel them to be now. What if for us there were to be no more teaching, no more calls to repent, no more pleading of God with us, no more drawing near to God, no more cleansing through the Sacrifice of Christ, no more changing and converting of our hearts through His grace. If this were so, how should we meet the Eye of our Judge? Would it be with hope or trembling? with humble faith, as in One Who knows our weakness, but knows also our earnest love, or would it be with terrible confusion and shame? What account have we to render up for the Gospel believed or despised, for sacraments used or abused, for advance in holiness or falling back into sin, for diligence or sloth, for good works done or left undone? Answer these questions to God in your own minds, my brethren, for it will depend very much

on the kind of answer which you are able to make whether you are prepared to take your part in the services of this day.

It is remarkable that the Church's view of the coming of our Blessed Lord is not terrible, but full of comfort. She does not speak to us to-day of the awfulness of Judgment. She scarcely mentions Judgment at all. She rather teaches us to look on to the last day as one that will complete and crown all our blessings. She describes our Lord not so much in the character of the all-searching Judge, as in that of the Redeemer returning and showing Himself to His expectant people to accomplish His work of mercy. The Church treats us, in fact, as her faithful and obedient children, who have acted upon her lessons for the past year, who have been true to her Lord, and are, therefore, watchful and longing for the end of all things.

All the more reason is there that we should try our own hearts well, lest we presume to claim the blessings which are prepared for those that love God, and find ourselves rejected, because He sees that we have neither faith nor love in us. But, if we can answer for the earnestness of our desire to be true to our Lord, then the services of this day are most cheering and full of hope.

Look at the Epistle: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous

Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth." Now, what does this mean? It has two meanings. It refers both to the first and to the second Advent of our Lord. It comforts the Jews by telling them that the time of their sorrows and sufferings in captivity should pass away, and the days should come in which they should once more be safe from their enemies. Out of the royal house of David, now brought so low, so decayed, that it was but as a dry root in the ground, there should spring a fresh Branch, even the Messiah. He should reign over the true Israel, His Church, and should protect, guard, and keep them from harm. He should gather His people together, and unite them once more; and so glorious and blessed would this deliverance be, that compared with it the coming out of the bondage of Egypt would be as nothing. We know that this prophecy has already had one fulfilment, when the Son of God was made man, when He suffered, died, rose, and conquered Satan, led captivity captive, gathered into one the people of God that were scattered abroad, and became the Head of His Church, our Strength and Refuge under all trial, temptation, and danger. But was that its last and complete fulfilment? Assuredly not. The Israel of God is not yet in perfect safety. Our enemies still surround us. We have still a battle to fight. Our

"own land" is not reached yet. "We see not yet all things put under" our Great King and Lord. We are still looking forward to a blessed time of more unbroken peace and rest than this present world has ever seen ; a time which will begin with that second great Advent of our Lord to which the Church now bids us look on. Then, indeed, when Christ returns from heaven, there will be an end of all suffering and sorrow for the redeemed. For them all trial, and temptation, and danger, will be for ever passed away. Then at last the glowing words of prophecy will come true : "Violence shall no more be heard within thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders." "It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His Hand the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left." "He shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." And, in that home to which He shall bring them, they shall be secure from all harm, for no one "shall hurt nor destroy in all" His "holy mountain." "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together ; and a little child shall lead them." "The branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low." "And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all

people a feast of fat things." "He will swallow up death in victory ; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces ; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth." "The sun shall no more be" their "light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto" them : "but the Lord shall be unto" them "an everlasting light, and" their "God" their "glory." "The days of" their "mourning shall be ended." "The people also shall be all righteous : they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of" the "planting of" the Lord, "the work of" His "Hands, that" He "may be glorified." For He shall "create new heavens and a new earth : and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." "And it shall be said in that day, 'Lo ! this is our God ; we have waited for Him, and He will save us : this is the Lord ; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His Salvation.'"

What must that time be which holy souls will welcome with such intense joy ? What but that day on which He shall come openly and visibly Who is even now the stay of our hearts, that day on which our "eyes shall at last see the King in His Beauty." What must that place be in which is such perfect peace, such spotless innocence, such purity, and such universal love ? It can only be that "new heavens

and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." For there indeed every bad passion shall be subdued to the Will of God, every weakness shall be removed by the power of His grace. There the soul shall be guarded from every temptation, and shielded from all trouble. There every faculty of our whole being shall be taken up with the service of God, and we ourselves filled with an unfailing strength to do the Will of Him on Whom all our affections shall be immovably fixed.

It is to this most blessed end of all things that the Church would have us look. All the year long she has taught us of our fall, and of the redemption which Christ has wrought for us. She has told us of the sin that is in us, and of the deep love of Him Who came in the flesh and died to deliver us from that sin. She has set before us, on the one hand, the hard strife we have to keep up against evil, the dangers that are round us, the afflictions that must be borne ; and, on the other, the rich gifts of grace which we have received, and the mighty aid that is ready for us (no less than Christ dwelling in us, feeding us with Himself, and pouring life into us). And now she says, See what is to come after all. "The end of your faith" is, that you may "receive the salvation of your souls." After all griefs and troubles, after all tears of repentance and earnest cries for grace, after struggling and

falling, struggling and rising again, at last the victory and the crown, and the rest, and the glory shall be yours. Through the Blood which Christ shed for you, you shall be cleansed from the sins over which you are now mourning. Through His strength working in you, you shall be set free from all the weakness and imperfection that now cleaves to you. The gates of heaven shall open before you, and you shall enter into an eternity of happiness. "Behold! the days come," when our Lord and "King shall reign and prosper." His Kingdom shall have come in perfect glory, and there shall no more be anything in us to gainsay or oppose Him. "He shall execute judgment and justice in the earth;" He shall cast "out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity." He shall trample under His Feet our great enemy Satan, and rid us of his oppression. "In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely;" all His faithful Church shall be secure under His defence from the fear of harm. "And this is His Name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." In the praises that they sing before His Throne, in the secret but intense thankfulness that shall stir their inmost being, all the whole company of the redeemed will rejoice to confess that He, and He only, has made them what they are; that to Him they owe the pardon of their sins, their new

birth, the change by which they passed from strength to strength, until at last they were made pure and fit for the vision of God. "Behold, the days come that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt ; but the Lord liveth, which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them." The days come when the faithful shall praise God, not so much for those first proofs of His love which He gave in separating them from the evil world (of which Egypt is a type), and delivering them from the bondage of Satan, (of which Pharaoh is a type), but rather for gathering them safely into one common home. "And they shall dwell in their own land ;" they shall no more be passing on as pilgrims through the wilderness of this life, suffering under its hardships, and sometimes half fearing lest they should faint and fail. No ; they shall at last be settled for ever in that glorious City which is "their own," because it was bought for them by the precious Sacrifice of Christ, the "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for" those "who are kept by the Power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed at the last time."

Such is the teaching of the Epistle, and the Gospel

carries it on. There we have the history of the feeding the five thousand. "A great company comes unto" our Lord. They are hungry. He makes them sit down, and feeds them. They are "filled," yet there is still food "over and above," after they "had eaten." "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world."

We have here in a parable that last great "eating of bread in the Kingdom of God," the filling of those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, the perfect satisfaction of the soul that feeds for evermore on Christ. The multitude of the saints follows our Blessed Lord through the wilderness of this world. They turn aside for nothing. They will have no food but what He gives them. For that they long and wait. At the last He bids them sit down, for He only can give them rest. He fills them, for He, and He alone, can meet, and answer, and supply every want of man's spirit. "In" His "Presence is the fulness of joy." He feeds them, but there is still more food before them; for the joys that Christ gives never waste. They are ever fresh and ever new. "At" His "Right Hand there are pleasures for evermore." And as they find that He can give them all and more than all they ever longed for, with one voice they magnify His miracles of love and say, "This is of a truth that

Prophet that should come into the world." This is that Saviour for whom the whole world has waited and yearned. This is He Who has taken pity on our miseries and lightened them. This is He Who has seen the sorrows and burthens under which we groaned, and has delivered us from them. This is He Who made our hearts, and knows what alone will satisfy them. This is He Who alone can set right the evil, the falseness, the sin that has marred and corrupted the earth. We have sought for peace with God; Christ alone can give it through His great atonement. We have striven to be holy; Christ alone can make us so by uniting us to Himself. He "is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world."

A moment's thought will show you how the teaching of this Sunday follows upon that of the previous Sundays. On the twenty-third Sunday we learnt that our conversation is in heaven, that even now on earth we belong to heaven, and are to live as subjects of our heavenly King. To-day we are reminded that at last we shall reach that land which is our true home.

On the twenty-fourth Sunday we were warned to seek forgiveness of those many sins which threaten to make us unfit for the purity of heaven. To-day we are comforted with a description of the peace

of those who shall be forgiven and accepted by God at last, never to fall away again.

And now, my brethren, see how fit a close is thus furnished us to the services of the year. The Church would say to us: Do not be cast down at present trouble. The days come in which they that mourn shall be comforted. Do not faint and fail at the temptations that try you for the present. Bear up bravely. These temptations will not last long. Cast your eyes onward. The days come when God's people "shall dwell safely." "Look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." If "now for a season ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations;" this is so, "that the trial of your faith," much more precious "than gold that perisheth when tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Do not let yourselves be drawn away from God by the things of this world. They never can make you really happy. At the most you can enjoy them only for a few short years. A little while, and money, or lands, or houses, or fine clothes, or gay companions, or meat and drink, will be no good to you. You will die, you will be judged. The earth will pass away. In that hour God's love

will be the only thing worth having. To love God, to be loved by Him, will fill you with happiness. Nothing else can. Seek this, then, now, and let nothing turn you from it.

See, again, how the Church begins and ends with Christ. All through her course she has set our Lord before us. He was to be our example: He, our strength. For His sake we were to look for forgiveness. By Him we were to be kept in this world, through Him prepared for glory. And now to find Him at last is held out to us as our greatest happiness. To dwell where Christ is, to be with Him, safe under His Protection, kept for evermore from all that may hurt us because we are in Him Whom evil cannot approach; to see Him, to be able to love Him—this we are to long for as the highest of all joys, beyond which there is nothing for us to ask.

Thus the Church leaves us standing, as it were, on the brink of eternity. Eternity! What a word to utter! How hard to grasp its meaning! To be always holy, always with God, always happy; or to be always wicked, always cast out, always miserable and damned—always in heaven, or always in hell—with no change for evermore. This is eternity. Intense and never-ending bliss; intense and never-ending woe; one of these will be our lot. Pause and think which will be yours. Call up before your minds

the scene of the last coming of our Lord. The sun is darkened. The moon does not give her light. The stars of heaven are shaken. The fearful trumpet sounds, and the voice of the Archangel summons the dead to judgment. The heavens open, and the Cross, the sign of the Son of Man, burns in the skies, the hope of the faithful, but the terror of the wicked who have despised it. There on the throne, with thousands of angels round Him, the Judge is seated. He turns to the wicked on His left Hand, and declares their terrible sentence: "Behold My Side which was pierced for you, My Hands and My Feet which were nailed to the Cross for you ; these bear witness how I longed, in My love, to save you. I called you, but you would not listen. I sought you, but you fled from Me. I offered you a place in My glory, but you despised it. I threatened you with the torments of hell, but you mocked at them. You have turned a deaf ear to My Voice pleading with you. You have quenched My Spirit within you. You have rejected the grace offered you, neglected My holy Sacraments, abused My patience and tender pity. You have chosen Satan for your master, and given your hearts to him. Therefore you must follow him to his punishment. ' Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' "

He turns to the faithful on His Right Hand, and

welcomes them with these words of mercy: “‘Come, ye blessed children of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ Come you that have been true and constant in My service, follow Me into My glory and bliss, as you have always followed Me in My humiliation and suffering.”

In that awful moment, which will be our lot? Shall we be among the blessed or the cursed? Let us pray heartily to God to “stir up” our “wills,” to move and urge our hearts to desire and love His service. Let us beg of Him so to fill us with His grace, that we may “plenteously bring forth the fruit of good works.” Then shall we be “plenteously rewarded,” not according to our merits, which are far below any reward, but according to the riches of God’s mercy, Who is pleased to reward our labours for Christ’s sake. Most plenteous indeed is that reward. It is no less than the entire healing of our body and soul, and the gift of every possible happiness that we can imagine or desire. For at the last coming of our Lord the bodies of the faithful will be raised from their graves to be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, to be set free from every weakness and every form of suffering that now afflicts them, to be made deathless, and to be clothed with a Divine strength and eternal beauty. At the same hour the souls of

the faithful will be finally purged from all taint of evil and sin, and filled with the most perfect holiness, with an unfailing power of serving, obeying, and delighting in God, without wavering and without distraction. And then this pure and holy family of God shall be gathered together ; those that have been torn asunder by death on earth, meeting again never to be parted any more ; widowed and orphaned hearts finding at last those after whom they have longed in weary seasons of bereavement ; the great fellowship of the saints, from the penitent once so nearly lost and so hardly found, up to Confessors, and Martyrs, and Evangelists, and Apostles, and the Blessed Mother of our Lord, all united visibly, and rejoicing in each other's joy. Most wondrous happiness ! Inexpressible and soothing peace !

Yet even this is not the true reward of the soul. God says, "I am thy exceeding great reward." To see God, and to be with Him, to know Him, to love Him, and to be loved by Him for evermore—this is that plenteous and crowning gift of God which shall satisfy the soul. After all the storms and sorrows of life, after all its dangers and temptations, after fears and failings, after earnest seeking and longing for God, after blind wanderings and penitent returns, to be brought home to God, to be in His very Presence, to be sure that He is ours and we are His for ever—

more—this is the highest bliss we can receive. To behold the Face of Christ in glory, to have found that Lord Who died for us, and Who has loved and shielded and cared for us all our days on earth ; to be in Him, to be certain that we shall never fall away from Him, but through the power of His continual grace shall serve God perfectly for ever—this is that reward whose plenteousness neither words of man can describe, nor thought of man conceive. This is that reward which the Church in her last solemn prayer bids us seek as the end of our being. For this we were born, for this redeemed. This is the one thing for which we should long, pray, strive, labour—to love God, be loved by God, and dwell in God for ever. May He of mercy grant that we lose not this !

“Behold, the days come !” Yes, He says Himself, “Behold ! I come quickly ; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” May we be able to answer, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus !”

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all ! Amen.”

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